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THE

WORKS

OF

THE RIGHT REVEREND

JOHN STARK RAVENSCROFT, D. D.,

BISHOP OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE DIOCESE OF NORTH CAROLINA,

CONTAINING HIS

SERMONS AND CHARGES,

REVISED BY THE AUTHOR TO THE AID OF THE MISSIONARY CAUSE IN NORTH CAROLINA;

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE.

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SERMON I.

THE NATURAL MAN.

1 CORINTHIANS II. 14.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of GOD, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

It requires but a small acquaintance with ourselves, my brethren, and no very extensive observation of human nature, to discover the import of the text; but it requires a deeper consideration than men in general are disposed to give it, to attain those advantages which flow from divine truth received and acted upon.

The primary object of revelation being to give to mankind information of what they could not otherwise know, and the information given being of things spiritual and heavenly, bearing upon our peace and comfort in time and our well-being in eternity, its claims upon our attention can only be rightly measured by the interests which are at stake; and it might most reasonably be presumed, that what was so vitally important to every individual person, would be as gladly and joyfully attended to, as thankfully embraced and followed out in its directions, as light is welcomed by the weary and benighted traveller, or the means of healing and health by the sick and diseased.

Yet observation and experience prove to us, my hearers, that it is otherwise in the practice of the world. The text, therefore, is verified to us in its assertion; and intimately connected as it is with the truth of our present condition, may lead to an improvement profitable to all present.

The subject before us, in connexion with the context, presents to our consideration two descriptions of persons, alike in their original, but different in their actual character—the natural and the spiritual man. It, therefore, obviously leads us to examine not only the distinction between them, but the

cause, also, of that distinction, with the consequences which attach to their respective states, as well by the reason of the thing as by the wise appointment of GOD.

I shall, therefore, endeavor to show you,

FIRST, what we are to understand by the words natural man, as here used by the apostle.

SECONDLY, what those things of the SPIRIT OF GOD are which are foolishness to the natural man.

THIRDLY, I shall inquire why these particular things are counted foolishness; and, then,

CONCLUDE with some remarks on the consequences which must follow to those who remain in this condition.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the SPIRIT OF GOD, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

I. First, I am to show you what we are to understand by the words natural man, as here used by the apostle.

In limiting the meaning of the words to the particular sense in which they are here used by the apostle, it is not to be inferred that there is no other and useful meaning in which this passage of Scripture is to be taken. It was not the apostle's intention, nor is it mine, to exclude the awfully verified truth, that to man fallen there is not, by his nature, any true knowledge of his own condition, or any saving knowledge of GOD. In this respect, we are all alike destitute of spiritual capacity or spiritual power. So true is this, that had GOD been silent, or withheld his HOLY SPIRIT, it never could have entered into the heart of man to conceive any thing of his nature, or of the worship and service due to him from rational beings. For though mankind are not deprived, by their fallen condition, of any of the faculties of rational creatures, yet so debased and degraded are those faculties, so perverted and turned round from their original destination, that they serve only a secondary purpose, and are conversant, not with spiritual, but sensible things, so that experience confirms the truth of GOD's word, that the world by wisdom never knew GOD.

In another respect, however, this disability is removed; "for the grace of GOD, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men." Particularly under the gospel is this distin-

guishing privilege conferred on all who hear the joyful sound; they are called, as our catechism expresses it, to a state of salvation by JESUS CHRIST, and furnished with all the means necessary thereto.

Yet, though this is undeniably the case, and the only view of the subject which makes religion a reasonable service, nevertheless, the glad tidings of the gospel and the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST do not operate as charms. As we are rational beings, the information given us is to be acted upon, the help offered us is to be resorted to, and the duties enjoined upon us are to be performed, otherwise there is no benefit to be expected.

Revelation is addressed, first to our understandings, next to our wants, then to our interests, and through all these to our affections. And when either sufficiently proved or admitted, as a communication from GOD, our reason has no other province than to receive or reject it. It is not the prerogative of our rational faculties to sit in judgment on the mode or the manner in which GOD shall reveal himself to his creatures, or yet on the means by which his benefits shall be conferred on us; with all this we have nothing to do, "we are saved by grace through faith." To act upon a different principle, then, is to usurp a station which does not belong to us, to the details of which we are not competent, and by the entertainment of which we manifest the very temper denounced in my text. Hence we learn, my brethren, to what description of persons St. Paul applies the expression of natural man, in the passage of Scripture under consideration.

It is the man who sets the wisdom of the world on a par with the wisdom of GOD. It is the man who would bring the mysteries of the divine will, in the redemption of the world, to be tried at the bar of human reason; it is the man who proudly rejects what his shallow reason cannot fathom; it is the man who carelessly neglects the treasures of divine wisdom furnished in the Scriptures of truth; it is the wise man, the philosopher, the disputer of this world, who would try the gospel, its glorious discoveries, its means, and its mercies, by a standard beneath its measure, and receive or reject it according as it agreed therewith. It is the Greek, who counted the preaching of the cross foolishness, because it

squared not with the rules of the philosophy of the day. This, my hearers, is the natural man whom the apostle had in his eye when he penned this passage, who receiveth not the things of the SPIRIT OF GOD, and to whom they are foolishness. The apostle speaks not here of the natural inability of fallen creatures to regain the favor of GOD, to comply with his holy and spiritual law, and prepare themselves for his presence in glory. This deficiency he was provided to remedy in every sincere mind, by the grace of that JESUS whom he preached to them; but he speaks of those who, when the gospel was proposed to them, received not the truth in the love of it, who submitted not themselves to the righteousness of GOD, by believing and obeying his message, but resisted it upon the strength of their own reason, or through the love of their own corruptions; making themselves wiser than GOD, and preferring time to eternity.

And are there none of this description of persons in the present day? Are there none among us who are entitled, in this acceptation of the words, to the name of natural men? Alas! for the multitudes who, either by neglect or perversion, bar themselves out from the grace of the gospel. Alas! for the thousands who dispute against the gospel, who think it an accomplishment to be above its faith and its duties, and who listen with greedy ears to what perverted reason can muster up in behalf of infidelity in some of its protean shapes. Alas! alas! cannot fallen sinners find the way to hell readily enough without deepening their damnation by sinning against light and knowledge, denying the LORD that bought them, and treading under foot the Son of GOD?

But it may and will be asked, of what use, then, is our reason, the distinguishing attribute of man, if it is not to be applied in this our supreme concern? And who ever said or thought that it is not to be here applied, yea, earnestly and diligently applied? Certainly I have never said so, nor yet given room for any to think I said so, unless by such an overhasty conclusion as darkens counsel.

Permit me, however, in my turn, to ask a question of these contenders for the supremacy of human reason. To what end, think you, was reason given you as respects things spiritual and invisible? what is its proper province in appli-

cation to them? Have you ever asked yourself this question? Can you answer it? If not, your boasted reason has not yet done the best part of its office for you.

Learn, then, that the highest use of the faculty of reason in man, fallen, is to render him capable of instruction in things of a spiritual and heavenly nature. Human reason can have no privity with the mind or will of God, and, had God been silent, never could have advanced one step beyond the things that are seen; for even the superstitions of the Heathen are all resolvable into the original revelation made to Adam after his fall. Revelation, then, is to reason, in things spiritual, what light is to the eye in things natural; for reason is the eye of the mind. However perfect, therefore, in all its parts the eye may be, take away the material light and where or what is its use? It is an incumbrance, a hindrance, presenting something to rely upon which yet answers not the purpose.

In like manner, my brethren, and by an analogy of the strictest kind, however perfect human reason may be, however improved and extended in all its capacities, deprive it of the light of revealed truth, and what is its value in spiritual things? Of what use, in particular, is it in the deep mystery of man's redemption by the Son of God? Alas! is it not, even to our experience, a hindrance, a stumbling block, a betrayer of souls to all those who will not learn its right use, but proudly exalt a depraved and perverted attribute of the creature into the place and station of the Most High God?

Human reason, my friends, is competent to determine whether we have a revelation of the will of God, because it is by this faculty alone, that the truth and certainty of the evidences by which its title is established are to be judged. But this being done, reason can go no further; it is not competent to decide on the propriety or fitness of what is revealed. For example—

Whether the doctrine of the trinity be a part of the revelation made to our faith, is a question for our reason to examine and determine. But whether it be consistent with the nature of the Supreme Being that such should be the manner of his subsistence, is a question we have no means of resolving, and, therefore, ought not to entertain. To assert,

then, upon grounds of human reason, that it is inconsistent with the unity of the Godhead that it should consist in three coeternal subsistences, is not only to be wise above what is written, intruding into things not seen, vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind, but is an illogical assumption of the point in argument. And to support this assertion by reasonings from the incomprehensibility to us of such a mode of subsistence in deity, is, in fact, atheistical; because the same argument is equally good against the being of God under any other mode of subsistence;—for a self-existent, underived, eternal Being, as the Almighty must be in his nature or not be at all, is as incomprehensible to our faculty in a single essence as in three.

The sum is this, my hearers: the fact our reason can compass, the mode it cannot compass. We, therefore, have nothing to do with the mode; and to intrude into it with our puny measure of intelligence, is precisely that abuse and perversion of reason which marks the natural man of my text, to whom the things of the Spirit of God, that is, the mysteries revealed to our faith, are foolishness.

Let, then, these plain and practical truths guard you, my brethren and hearers, against the seductive sophistry, which would exalt your reason at the expense of your souls—which would lead you away from the only foundation, and leave you on the dark and slippery steps of an unreasonable infidelity. For, as the apostle argues, in the 11th verse of this chapter, "what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him, even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

But, while this is undoubtedly the primary sense in which the apostle here uses the words natural man, as is evident from the context—for he, throughout, contrasts the natural man with the spiritual, or spiritually enlightened man—yet, as I observed in the outset, this is not the only sense in which the text is to be used and applied by us. For we may apply it to man as he now is, a fallen, depraved creature, savoring only the things of time and sense, and indisposed and averse to the entertainment of things spiritual and heavenly. It also denotes the unrenewed man, the person upon whom the grace of the gospel has produced no change; upon whom the

Spirit of God hath not operated the mighty transformation of a new creature. And this, because the discoveries of the gospel have not been met in faith, and God sought unto, as he is therein revealed and set forth, by and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This gives to the words of my text a wide range, my brethren, inasmuch as it includes all who hold themselves back from the claims of the gospel upon their attention and observance, whether that proceed from the proud and lofty pretensions of infidel reason, or the carelessness and neglect of worldly occupation, or the love of sensual indulgence. To what extent and under what designation the words may be most properly applied, those who hear them are the most competent judges; and I earnestly beseech all present, who are not conscious of that spiritual change which must pass upon all who would see God and live, seriously to lay to heart the unutterable consequences of turning a deaf ear to saving truth, and an unwilling mind to commanded duty. The day of grace is shortening—the day of eternity is drawing near—"awake, then, thou that sleepest" in thy natural state, "and Christ shall give thee light."

II. Secondly, I am to show you what those things of the Spirit of God are, which are foolishness to the natural man.

That these are the mysteries of the gospel, the things which in an especial manner are the things of Jesus Christ, and which he told his disciples the Holy Spirit would take and show unto them, is clear, both from the tenor and purpose of the gospel, and from the whole structure of the apostle's argument in this epistle.

The Grecian philosophers of St. Paul's day decried and derided the doctrines of the cross; they brought the things of the Spirit of God—preached by him with great plainness of speech, indeed, but with miraculous attestation to their truth —to the standard of the wisdom of their schools, and, because not answerable to the principles of their philosophy, they rejected them.

It was not the morality of the gospel, my hearers, that was foolishness in their view, but its spirituality. No men taught more zealously the moral principles of truth, justice, and temperance, than the ancient sages of Greece. With this

part of Christianity there was no difficulty. But they stumbled at those mysterious but heaven-attested doctrines, in union with which only can the morality of fallen sinners be exalted to the dignified station of religion. It was the stupendous doctrine of God made sin, that man might be made the righteousness of God in him, with all that flows from this doctrine, of our lost and undone condition, and of our need of renewing grace, that offended their self-righteous estimation of their own worth. It was the incarnation of God the Son—the sacrifice of the cross—the virtue of the atonement thereby made for sin, and the unqualified necessity of faith in this crucified Jesus, as God manifest in the flesh—dying for our sins—rising for our justification—ascended into heaven for our assurance of immortality—glorified and reigning for salvation to the ends of the earth, and constituted the judge of quick and dead—these were the high discoveries which overthrew the systems of their fanciful mythology. It was at these stumbling truths that their pride revolted. It was by these mysterious doctrines that their wisdom was confounded; and as they received not the love of truth that they might be saved, they incurred the delusion of believing a lie that they might be damned. And is there nothing in this warning, my friends, which knocks awfully at the hearts of those who stand in the like danger by incurring the like guilt? Is there nothing to alarm the fears of those who exalt the meagre and vapid reasonings of infidel science against God and the word of his grace? Is there nothing to show the wise, and the mighty, and the noble of this Christian land, why the gospel is not the power of God unto salvation to them? Is there nothing in this delineation of the first principles of religion, to enable all present to determine whether they are natural or spiritual men? Above all, is there nothing to show them that better way which God has marked out and promised to bless all who walk in it? O, beware, my dear brethren and hearers, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit—after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. And O, beware that ye stop not short of that renewal of the Spirit of God in you, which alone can prepare a fallen, spiritually dead creature, for life and glory eternal!

III. Thirdly, I am to inquire why these particular things are counted foolishness.

To say that this is occasioned by the want of senses exercised to discern the application and efficacy of the discoveries of the gospel, would be leaving the subject where we found it, and leaving those, also, who are in this deplorable state, without the help and counsel provided for them. It is, therefore, to the neglect of obvious duty on the part of those who are favored with divine revelation, that this state of indifference and deadness to the interests of hereafter is to be ascribed. That such multitudes, Gallio-like, care for none of those things, and the activity of rational natures, made, and formed, and furnished, to glorify God and enjoy him for ever, are content to famish on the husks and garbage of a perishing world, are content to remain in the darkness and hopelessness of the things that are seen, even amid the bright shining of the light of life.

Of this, the true cause of the evil, and the just answer to this inquiry, the proof, I trust, will be evident from the following considerations:

First, if God hath spoken to us, and we are in possession of his will and directions, the undeniable duty of every rational being is, to acquaint himself with that will and to follow those directions.

Secondly, it is on the performance of this duty that God hath limited his blessing in the growth and increase of spiritual help and power.

The first consideration is so self-evidently true as to meet the unqualified assent of all who hear it: and it follows, undeniably, in an equal degree, that whoever does not carefully consider and follow out the will of God, either denies the fact of a revelation or despises the revealer; and, consequently, cannot expect any of the spiritual benefits promised to faith and obedience. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

The second consideration is equally capable of proof, and of a proof not only derived from authority, but from the reason of the thing. God hath no need of the sinful man, therefore it is by grace that we are saved.

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." The mercies of redemption and the means of grace, therefore, are the talents, in their various extent, committed to our trust on the declared condition of improvement. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath."

With this equitable rule, all that the Saviour of the world hath taught and promised is in perfect agreement. "I came not to destroy men's lives but to save them. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters; he that believeth not shall be damned."

From all which, and much more that might be produced, it must be evident that the blessing of spiritual illumination, so essential to a fallen creature, is limited on the previous condition of our faith in and submission to the revealed will of God; nor can it be conceived in what other way religion, as a reasonable and possible duty, can be addressed to moral creatures in a state of reprieve and probation for eternity. All doubt on this point, however, is happily done away by the standing declaration of the gospel—"Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." For, says our blessed Lord, and happy experience confirms the truth, "every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Hence it must be evident, and I pray God that it may be the effectual conviction of every soul that now hears me, that if we are natural men, in the sense here used by the apostle; if we are indifferent to the high discoveries of the gospel; if we are careless of the manifestations of God, therein made to the faith and observance of his creatures; if the course and occupation of our lives, or the open or secret tenor of our thoughts, show louder than words, that they are foolishness unto us; it must be our fault, it cannot be our infirmity; it must be our condemnation, it cannot be our ex-

cuse. God hath done all that is necessary to remove our natural disability for spiritual things; he hath set before us whatever can confirm faith, excite hope, or alarm fear in rational creatures: but if we will none of his ways, if we will be wiser than God in the things of God, and risk our immortal souls on the unreasonable venture, what remains, but that having chosen darkness rather than light, the way of life shall be hid from us for ever. "For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; neither is there salvation in any other—for there is none other name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved, only the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth."

I have now to conclude with some remarks on the consequences which must follow to those who remain in this condition.

And first, it must, I think, be evident, that were those consequences confined to the present life, they are worth an exertion to be avoided; for either all serious thought must be excluded, or thought must be painful. The natural man differs but little from the brute, and that difference is against the man. In the day of prosperity and enjoyment, the natural man, like the ox in a fat pasture, may give himself up to every delight of the carnal mind, and drown and extinguish the voice of reason and reflection in the festivities of wantonness, or occupy his faculties exclusively in the acquisitions of time; but in the day of adversity where is his resource? The brute has no anticipations—the man has. As his prosperity was without God, so is his adversity without one ray of comfort. Thought is his enemy and reflection his torment, because he perverts his distinguishing character as a rational being, and will not point it to God. But more than this: it is a sense of God, of his undeserved goodness, of the wonders of his love in the gift of Jesus Christ for the redemption of sinners, which gives to the various mercies of his providence their proper character; this the natural man deprives himself of. The most prosperous and happy condition terminates with the short uncertainty of time; the natural man cannot look beyond it, further than conjecture; but it is not so with adversity. God, in aid of his truth, hath planted an impression in every heart, that adversity ends not

with this life to the sinner. A certain fearful looking for of judgment, which he cannot shake off, though he can resist it,—for he is a moral being and not a machine,—haunts the natural man, with the fear which hath torment; his prosperity, therefore, is unblessed—his adversity is without comfort. If more than this is the portion of the natural man, of the man who hath no discernment or desire of the things of the Spirit of God, it can only be what he has in common with the beasts that perish.

But, secondly, when this world and all its delusions come to close, when the inevitable sentence to which all must submit makes the truth of God victorious over all the vain reasonings of an infidel philosophy, when the pride of opinion can no longer bear up against the realities which this hour brings forward—what then, my hearers, are the consequences to the natural man, to the man for whom Christ has died in vain, with whom the Holy Spirit has striven in vain, and God put forth the whole extent of his love, for salvation, without effect? Shall I attempt to speak of them? No, imagination is exhausted and expression overwhelmed under the awful contemplation. To your hearts, to your consciences, then, I refer you for what cannot be uttered, and may God in mercy seal his truth to your souls' health.

SERMON II.

SIN.

ROMANS vii. 13.

But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

That there is a principle at work in the world which is in opposition to the reason of our own minds, to the peace and comfort of society, and to individual happiness, has in every age of the world been the experience and the acknowledgment of all descriptions of persons. Heathen philosophers, equally with Christian moralists and professors of religion, have united in one unvarying testimony to a state of disorder in the moral world—the mind and affections of man—as plainly marked as that which is displayed in the world called natural. This principle, under the personification of a power or agent working in us, is denominated sin, and is set forth in the Scriptures as the true and only cause of all the disorder and misery known and suffered in this world, and of all that can be anticipated by the conscious objects of its influence in that which is to come.

This knowledge, however, of the cause and of the connexion of the state of disorder in the natural and moral world, was hid from the Heathen philosopher. He could conjecture and reason, and an occasional gleam from traditionary revelation would bring him to the confines of the truth; but certainty and satisfaction were beyond his reach. Alas! that so many Christian moralists, especially the more modern ones, by preferring the rush-light of human reason, in matters beyond their experience, to the clear and decisive discoveries of revealed truth, should be in no better case. But to the Christian, and to the Christian only, it is given, to trace these acknowledged effects to their cause, to account for the connexion between them, to understand their bearing upon himself, and to give to the cause itself its true and genuine character, co-

lor, and operation. And happy had it been for Christian lands, had this their privilege and advantage been duly estimated and rightly applied; yea, happy will it be for that Christian land, for that individual Christian, who will yet make this improvement of what is so freely bestowed upon them.

That it may be thus considered and applied by that portion of Christian people who are now present, is my desire and design. And, as we cannot rightly appreciate the advantages of revelation and the obligations of religion, without considering deeply what it is that has rendered revealed religion and instituted means of grace necessary to us, and an interposition of heaven's mercy in our behalf, whatever is calculated to bring our thoughts to act upon so essential a part of our religious and moral condition, must be helpful to us—must be profitable to our souls.

To this end, nothing, in my judgment, can contribute so effectually as a serious consideration of the nature, influence, and consequences, of sin as a component part of our fallen frame, exerting a constraining power over us, and operating to our ruin now and for ever. And though this is a subject on which most will suppose that they need nothing, either to inform or impress them, I am well persuaded of the contrary. I am fully convinced, that there is no one subject, religion itself excepted, on which there are such vague and unsettled notions, or on which men so readily content themselves with admission in the gross, and with disregard in the particulars.

What, let me ask, is more universally admitted as existing and operating to our destruction? And yet, how few, in comparison, are engaged in breaking its chain and escaping from its snare? What more common with all classes of men, even with those who make the service of sin their daily occupation as it were, than to admit in words, its dangerous and destructive nature, and yet the next minute go in pursuit of some of its miserable deceits? What more common with those who call themselves Christians, with professors of religion, than to find even them parleying and tampering with it in some unlawful conformity to the world, in its vain and vicious pursuits, and manifesting little or no anxiety respecting its influence on their children, their friends, and their

neighbors, like the Pharisees of old, limiting sin to the letter of the law, and, if not forbidden in the decalogue, shutting their eyes to the spiritual extent of that holy law.

But could this be so, were the real malignity, the damning nature, the universal influence, and the dreadful consequences of sin felt, and considered, and realized as they ought to be? Could it be thus if the very purpose of a law against sin in particulars, were borne in mind? And yet Christians are instructed that by "the law is the knowledge of sin;" and St. Paul tells us that "he had not known lust," that is, the existence of sin in this shape within him, "except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." This opened up to him a mine of iniquity within, far beyond the specific prohibitions of the law, and made him feel what a wretched man he was without the gospel. This explains to us how it is that "without the law sin was dead," that is, dormant, not felt in its stirrings. How, without the law, that is, the law not recognized, not considered, not realized in the extent of its obligation, and, therefore, as if there was no law, St. Paul says, "he was once alive," at one period without fear or apprehension from the sanctions of the law denounced against sin. Under this view we come to understand how it is, that when "the commandment came," when the law of God was seen in the purity and extent of its precepts, "sin revived and he died." Sin, before dormant and quiet, because not interrupted by positive prohibition, was thereby roused into active resistance, and showed, by prevailing against the precept, that however holy, and just, and good the law was in itself, it was nevertheless powerless, weak through the flesh, to subdue and conquer sin, and, therefore, could only confirm the death due to and denounced against it, and against him as under its power and dominion.

In this experimental delineation of the awakenings of the SPIRIT we learn to understand, my brethren, in what sense "the law is the strength of sin." How it comes to pass that prohibition actually increases the desire to transgress, and stirs up the carnal mind to resist the authority and the reason of the law, and the conscience and interest of the sinner. We are prepared to meet the apostle in the question preceding the text, to perceive a purpose in the law itself which,

otherwise, we should not have thought of, and thus to find the law our schoolmaster, to bring us to CHRIST for that grace, without which sin must continue its mastery over us; shutting us out forever from GOD, and delivering us over to his wrath. "Was, then, that which is good made death unto me?" says the apostle. Was it the purpose of the law of GOD to increase our misery, by showing the utter hopelessness of fulfilling its requirements and escaping its penalty? "GOD forbid." No. "But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful"—that, being shown in its true colors by an express command against it, the guilt of its commission might be aggravated, and men, deterred from its hateful and ruinous practice, might be awakened to the danger, and drawn to the only remedy against its power, in the grace of GOD through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

The text being thus explained, in connexion with the context, and the apparent difficulty, from the manner of expression, removed, I will now proceed to enforce the weighty warning and instruction contained in it, by considering,

FIRST, the nature of sin.

SECONDLY, the extent of its influence.

THIRDLY, the consequences both present and future; and, then,

CLOSE with an application of the whole.

I. First, I am to consider the nature of sin.

Sin, in its nature, is opposition to GOD, actual hatred of and enmity to his purity and holiness. It must, therefore, be the chief evil, and, as such, the abhorrence of the Chief Good. No language can express it more truly, no delineation can describe it more exactly, or enable us to realize more fully its detestable qualities, in all the darkness of their malignity.

Again: sin, in its nature, is an internal principle, seated in the heart.

In this view, sin is not so properly an act or series of actions, as a habit or disposition of the soul. We are told, indeed, in the word of GOD, "that sin is the transgression of the law," and it is so most certainly; but it is this in such wise, as the breach of the law is conclusive evidence of the sinful

principle existing within us. Sin and transgression stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect; were there no sinful principle there would be no sinful practice.

This may be illustrated by the principle which obtains in the administration of civil laws.

In the case of unlawful killing, the overt act of murder is evidence of the *malus animus*, the malice aforethought, which constitutes the crime. In like manner of theft, profaneness, and any other forbidden act. Human laws, indeed, concern themselves mainly to repress the outward action, and when this is not committed, they have no operation. The divine law, on the contrary, takes cognizance of the intention, the disposition which gives birth to the action; it most pointedly forbids and condemns the sinful act, but reserves a deeper condemnation for the hostile principle to GOD and goodness thereby manifested.

Once more: sin in its nature is a unit, and is, therefore, independent of more or less in the outward evidences of its existence. It is not the number or the magnitude of transgressions which constitutes sin; these are only the evidences of the greater or less degree of the power it has over us. The principle of opposition to GOD is as truly manifested by one as by one hundred transgressions, just as one murder as completely determines the presence of malice, as any number could do; not that the degree of guilt from one transgression, either in the sight of GOD or man, is as great as from many, but that it is sufficient evidence of the fact. And this is the ground and the reason of the Scripture declaration, "whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

II. Secondly, I am to consider the extent of its influence.

Alas, my hearers, where, in the boundary of this poor world, shall we find the spot free from the influence of sin! We shift from place to place, we change occupation and pursuit, we flee to new and unexplored countries; but we cannot escape from ourselves,—sin goes with us—we carry it in our hearts—it follows us like a shadow. Alas! that it should be so favorite a companion.

Its influence, then, may be pronounced universal. To love it in some shape is the taint and infection it hath brought

upon our nature; to yield to its temptations, yea, to hunt out its short lived perishing pleasures, madly to pluck and eat this forbidden fruit, is the pregnant evidence of its all-pervading presence.

What stage of our being is free from its influence? Alas! before we can fairly be considered accountable beings, its buds appear, its blossoms open, its fruit forms. It takes the start of reason, and, too often, it keeps the track. When reason, lagging behind, comes up, what can it do with this mighty foe, who holds the reins and drives the passions headlong to present enjoyment? Its powers are weakened, its perceptions darkened, its will perverted by the very adversary it has to hold in check; it can see the good, but how to do it it finds not; it may say, drive not so madly, but the law in the members is stronger than the law of the mind; it may say stop, and stop it may in one direction, secure of another in which its influence, though less obvious, will be equally sure. Oh! what a Proteus is this ever present enemy, even with the aid of divine revelation, by which all its deceits are exposed, all its dangers declared, and through which help is offered against this enemy. How feeble and powerless is this boasted defence against the influence of sin! If this is not so, how comes it to pass that so many of those now before me, both men and women, who have reason, who have revelation, who have warning, are yet the servants of sin in some of its multifarious deceits? Is there no opposition to God in the hearts of those who, instead of remembering their Creator in the days of their youth, rush into every folly and vanity which the world spreads before them, and drown the care of the soul in the vortex of dissipation? Is there no enmity to the purity and holiness of God in those who sow to the flesh, and, in the lusts of uncleanness and the brutishness of intemperance, set reason and religion both at defiance? Is there no mark of the carnal mind in those who coolly and decently labor and strive for a portion in this life; good, orderly, moral, church or meeting going people—God not in all their thoughts—no fear of him before their eyes—no love of him in their hearts—who never give an hour to his service beyond the heartless formality of a Sunday forenoon? Yea, even in the professing world, is there no seasoning of sin in

drawing near to GOD with the lips while the heart is far from him—in conforming to the world—in narrowing duty—in neglect of prayer—in selfishness—in spiritual pride—in separations and divisions? Above all, what but the influence of sin can make professing parents negligent of the welfare of their children's spiritual concerns, or be content with a cold and occasional admonition? "Oh! wretched creatures that we are! who shall deliver us from the body of this death?" O, that I could hear the groan echoing from every heart: for there is deliverance, thanks be to GOD, there is deliverance from the reigning power of this tyrant; but it is not in man; it is not in any effort of his reason, nor in any exertion of his own fallen, sin-infected powers. GOD, even the Almighty, must put forth the might of a new creation to quicken us into life; the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, "who was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of GOD in him," alone can stay the plague and create a new heart, and renew a right spirit within us: and the law of GOD with its eternal sanctions; and the revelation of GOD with its precious promises; and the love of CHRIST with its winning attractions, are all set forth with divine evidence, to awaken and encourage, and engage us to seek the help that is in him. Faith is the talisman which strips the mask from sin, snatches the reins from her maddening hand, and delivers them over to the SPIRIT OF GOD, under whose holy discipline the power of sin is broken, the influence of sin is defeated; old things are done away—a new life begins, and "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Yet, mighty as is this help, freely as it is offered, and great as is our necessity, behold, once more, how great and how extended is the influence of sin. Let one hour pass, and where will these truths be which now fall so heavy on your consciences? Let one week pass, and to how many of you, whose eyes are now cast down under the home truth of GOD's faithful word, shall I be as one "that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument," and that truth itself cast down under the dominion of sin? Again, I say, "Oh! wretched men that we are, who shall deliver us from the body of this death?"

That we may in earnest seek this deliverance, I will now consider and point out, as was proposed,

III. Thirdly, the consequences of sin, both present and future.

That to sin, pursued and followed in some shape by ourselves or others, we owe all the distresses and miseries of this life, is alike the witness of revelation and the result of experience. GOD has laid his curse upon sin, and sin, in the malignity of her revenge, transfers her curse upon man, the favored creature of GOD. Fools and blind, that we are, to yield ourselves the servants of this deceiver, against knowledge, against warning, against experience, against help and means, freely provided and held forth, against the fear of hell and the hope of heaven.

Broken health, ruined fortunes, misery and crime, are the bitter fruits with which sin repays her votaries in the present life. And, though there may be some who, to appearance, escape these consequences, and in success and enjoyment glitter above their fellow servants, yet are these but exceptions which confirm the general rule, and show more fearfully in the end, on what a slippery steep they stand; for it is but for a season. Sooner or later the blast overtakes them, the sand gives way under them, their master deceives them and pays their faithful services with his only wages—shame and contempt, poverty and nakedness, remorse and despair, disease and death.

But were outward calamity and suffering all we had to dread in yielding to the deceits of sin, though a dear price for its perishing gratifications, the folly and madness of the choice would not be so great; there might be a sort of balance struck between the price and the purchase, as concerns the present life, and the arithmetic of the sinner would cast it up in his own favor. When, however, we must take into the account the inward misery that follows in the accusations of conscience, the gnawings of guilt, the fear that hath torment, the anticipations of judgment, an offended GOD, and a rejected Saviour, what is there in the utmost range of sinful enjoyment to balance this mental agony? Oh! how gladly would the sufferer give it all back for one moment's ease, for a single hour of peace from the gnawings of the worm that never dies. "But there is no peace, saith my GOD, to the wicked."

There is yet another consequence of sin in the present life, my hearers, more common, more destructive, and not as much considered as it ought to be, which I will mention, and that is the effect produced by negligence and delay in forsaking the ways of sin. Now this is universally a deadening of the feelings, a hardening of the heart, a callousness of the conscience, almost hopeless to any religious impression. This is a condition more dangerous than even that of the outbreaking profligate sinner, inasmuch as the one may be alarmed and arrested by the very madness of his folly, while the other dreams on under the sleep of sin; and as this is the case with the more orderly and decent part of society, who give some countenance to religion, but go no further, it is both more common and more destructive to souls than any other deceit.

If I were to name the most general and destructive sin in my knowledge, I would at once name procrastination—the putting off till to-morrow, the neglect of warnings, the being false to the voice of conscience. And as the very act is and ought to be full proof that we prefer sin, that sin reigns, no other consequence can follow, than deeper subjection to its power, and greater estrangement from God. What, let me ask this congregation of Christian people, ought to be the course of every one of them, under the information and grace of the gospel? Ought they to sit still, folding their hands like the sluggard, and waiting passively to be converted? Ought they to continue in the active service of sin, in the miserable delusion of repenting hereafter? Or ought every one of them to be up and doing now, while it is called to-day; not conferring with flesh and blood, but breaking off their sins by repentance, and their iniquities by righteousness, laboring and striving to make their calling and election sure? Can one hour's delay in such a case be justified? And yet, who among you will act upon the verdict conscience now brings in against yourselves, before God the Judge? Alas! alas! that, turn which way we will, the influence of sin meets us, and casts its damning veil over truth and reason, and conscience and revelation. But will this excuse us? No, my dear hearers, it will rather condemn us. For it is the very point heaven is in conflict with, which Christ died to save us from, and which the grace of God is given us to overcome.

Put forth an effort, then, against this enemy. With prayer for grace, make trial of the means which GOD has provided in CHRIST JESUS, and promised to bless. You owe it to the goodness of GOD; you owe it to the love of CHRIST; you owe it to your own souls. For, says unchangeable truth, "except ye repent ye shall perish," which is the future consequence of sin unrepented, unforsaken.

That the enemy of GOD should be forever shut out from his presence, we are prepared, by natural equity, to acknowledge and feel to be just. The sinner, then, continuing such, must surrender all hope of happiness hereafter. Yet sin the deceiver will whisper, be not afraid, GOD is merciful—CHRIST has died—you will escape somehow—at any rate you can repent hereafter.

That the rebel, lying at the mercy of Omnipotence, who rejects offered mercy, and spurns from him pardon and reward, deserves punishment in its severest form, our own sense of justice pronounces right. The sinner, then, continuing such, under the offered mercy, pardon, and grace of the gospel, passes his own sentence, and must go away into perdition by the judgment of his own lips. For to be for ever shut out from GOD, and endure the infliction of his wrath, is perdition; yet the enemy of GOD and man will argue, as in the beginning, "ye shall not surely die;" GOD will not punish a finite offence with an infinite punishment; sin is not that hateful thing the ministers of CHRIST represent it, but a thing to be desired, which will add to your present happiness, enlarge the sphere of your knowledge, and extend your experience of life. And sits there the man before me whom the enemy has not encountered in this guise? Sits there the man or woman before me, who has not held this parley with sin, and yielded to this sophistry, and put forth the rebellious hand and plucked and eaten of this forbidden fruit? And sits there, then, one before me who has not incurred the penalty denounced against sin by the law of GOD?—"The soul that sinneth it shall die." And what constitutes the death of the soul? Not extinction of being—the image of GOD's eternity must needs be immortal; it cannot die in that sense in which the mortal body is resolved into its original dust. The death of the soul, then, must consist in privation of that good for

which it was formed, in suffering that evil which it has wilfully followed, and in enduring that punishment which is set forth in the torments of endless despair and everlasting burnings, "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched."

Now, my friends, have you ever tried to realize perdition under any shape? Have you ever reflected on an eternity of suffering, measured in its degree only by the unlimited power of Omnipotence, and in its duration, by the capacity of an immortal soul, in a body rendered imperishable to this very end? O, if you never have, let what has now been said awaken you to the solemn meditation, and lead you to a profitable application of this warning, and of the deliverance within your reach.

To the conscience, to the reason, to the experience, then, of every soul now present, let me appeal.

Is this testimony of God's word, a true and faithful witness on the subject before us? Do reason, and experience, and conscience, all unite in confirming this to be the true condition of fallen man?—"carnal, sold under sin." Are we all conscious of "a law in our members, warring against the law of our minds?" Have we the experience, "that when we would do good evil is present with us?" Do we not see the good, and approve of the good, and yet find not how to do it?

And is not this sufficient to convince us that there is an enemy within, which must be dispossessed before the divine image can be renewed in our hearts? Is it not of sufficient weight to interest and engage every being capable of thought, in this spiritual contest? "Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Awake, and look thy condition in the face. Be no longer blinded by the deceitfulness of sin, but learn the full extent of this mighty undoing—that Jesus Christ, and him crucified, may be the anchor of hope to thy soul. He came to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He came to purchase mercy and grace for sinners penitent and believing. He came to destroy death, and him that had the power of death, and having finished the work he had undertaken for us men, and for our salvation, he calls to the ends of the earth, to come unto him and be saved. "To-day, then, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Think not

lightly of that which cost the Son of GOD his life, to stay the sentence gone forth against it, and purchase a reprieve for sinners. Trifle not with the mortal disease which rankles in every fibre of soul and body with the contagion of eternal death—but come to the great physician of souls, who alone can arrest its progress and deprive it of its virulence. Come to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness in the blood of CHRIST, which taketh away the sins of the world. Come to the grace of the gospel, which renews the heart and reforms the life. Hear his faithful promise—"sin shall not have dominion over you"—and let it impart strength to the sin-sick soul, to pray and not to faint. Hear his awful threatenings—"As for these mine enemies, who would not have me to reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before my face;" and let it startle every delaying, parleying sinner, to count the cost at which he is trifling with eternity. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end." Merciful GOD! unstop their ears, unclose their eyes, take the veil from their hearts, "that they may learn the things which make for their peace, before they are for ever hid from their eyes, and iniquity prove their everlasting ruin."

SERMON III.

SIN AND DEATH.

ROMANS v. 12.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

Had heavenly wisdom never declared it to us, the cause of that sin and misery here, and of that eternal condemnation hereafter, to which we are all liable, my hearers, must for ever have remained hid from us, and aggravated the sufferings of time, by the hopelessness of any relief from them, even by the release of death. And it is but to consider the close connexion of what is revealed with our original inward impressions—the bearing it has upon our actual condition, and the universal relief it administers to our most pressing anxieties, to endear to our hearts the comfortable and blessed light which the gospel sheds over the dreary scene of this prison-house of sinners. I say universal relief, for even the sinner himself, though at war with GOD and the word of his grace, yet by a perversion without a parallel, takes comfort, from the discoveries therein made, against the horror and despair which must otherwise haunt every moment of cool reflection. And I appeal to the law written in the heart of every sinner present, whether he is not thereby condemned already; and to the knowledge which his education in a Christian land has given him of JESUS CHRIST, whether he makes him not the minister of sin, by a loose, inconsiderate expectation, that notwithstanding his heart condemns him, and the law of GOD condemns him, and the gospel of CHRIST condemns him, yet somehow or another, GOD's mercy will excuse and acquit him at the judgment of the great day.

If this be true—and I fear not the answer that can be given to it—it confirms the leading truth of revelation, set forth in my text, of the fallen, ruined condition of our nature, of the misery of our state, as aliens from GOD, and enemies

to his purity and holiness, and of the hopelessness of our prospects from any thing in ourselves. For surely that person who sees the good, yet finds not how to do it, who does the evil which the law of his own mind and the law of God alike condemn him for, and, in such circumstances, turns with contempt and disgust from the offer of grace and mercy procured for him by the merits of another, must have lost the original character impressed on him by his Creator.

Could this be doubted, the prevalence of the self-righteous principle in fallen man would confirm it; than which, the pride which ruins us, never sent forth a more destructive scion—for it consists in that presumptuous sense of his own worthiness, of the goodness of his heart, of the moral rectitude of his life, which betrays the sinner into meeting the requirements of God's holy law, without a shield from that infinite justice which demands, for every infraction of its purity, the tremendous vindication of eternal death. And it is at once a curious, instructive, and humbling exercise, to trace the workings of it in the heart, to consider how it prevails by the flattery of its approaches; how it wards off or disarms the testimony of the sinner's own heart to the guilt of his life, balancing many directly sinful actions by one or more real virtues or amiable traits of constitutional character.

It is true, will it say, you are profane in your conversation, but it is only habit, there is no malignity in your heart; you are lewd in your conduct, but you are just in your dealings and true to your word; you doubt whether you love God, but you show that you do so in the best sense, for you are friendly, liberal, and humane—you are charitable to the poor, and charity, you know, covers the multitude of sins. There is no occasion for uneasiness. If persons of your correct deportment are in danger of damnation, who, then, can be saved? And thus are thousands content to be hoodwinked by the ruinous sophistry, that because they are not the veriest profligates that disgrace human nature, they are, therefore, in a safe way of salvation, and this in the very teeth of the misgivings of their own hearts, that all is not right for eternity.

But should these misgivings of mind be happily of a deeper and more hopeful nature, so as not to suffer them to rest satisfied with such commonplace defences; this evil spirit has

still further resources of the same description. Should the sinner really admit that he is such, it can tell him that we are all sinners in the sight of GOD; that as fallen creatures we cannot be otherwise; that GOD does not expect or require perfection from such; that he has given his Son JESUS CHRIST to atone for our sins, and supply all the deficiencies of our frail and imperfect endeavors; that he only requires us to be sorry for our sins, to confess them, and trust in him for the pardon of them. And thus do multitudes stifle the convictions of a better spirit, and settle down upon the sandy foundation of their own righteousness, as far as it will go, and the mercy of GOD, with or without JESUS CHRIST, as it happens, for the balance. But, all this while, what GOD himself hath declared is unheeded; his acknowledged word lies unopened, unconsulted; his clear and express testimony that there is salvation for the race of Adam only in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, "whom GOD hath made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of GOD in him," and that the justice of GOD can no otherwise harmonize with his mercy, in the justification even of a penitent sinner, than as that sinner is found united in CHRIST by a living faith, is wholly disregarded.

Now let me ask this congregation of Christian people, do not those who thus act under the known and dread alternative of eternal glory or everlasting misery, set their seal to the truth of the doctrine contained in my text, and demonstrate, not merely the fact as revealed in the word of GOD, but the desperate and deceitful nature of the malady under which we all labor, and from which a heavenly physician alone can recover us.

But as they that are whole, or think themselves so, can hardly be persuaded to apply to the means of help and healing, and as no danger is so great as that which really impends over us, but is neither seen or regarded, I shall endeavor, with GOD's good help and blessing, so to apply the text as to demonstrate from the express declarations of GOD's word, from the confessions and acknowledgments of all holy men in all ages, and from the actual condition of all present, that there is nothing in us to warrant our meeting the judgment of GOD in our righteousness, or to propitiate his favor for our sins and imperfections.

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned."

I. First, the express declarations of God's word.

The Holy Ghost who inspired the writing of the Scriptures of our faith, is in nothing more earnest than to do away all occasion for pride and vain glory in the creature. And this, I am persuaded, from the knowledge, that of all our other vices, it is the most deeply rooted in human nature, and the most ruinous to our souls. The book of God, accordingly, abounds with most pointed lessons against the fatal consequences of this inveterate principle, and to teach us that humility which is the only entrance to all-saving knowledge, sets before us the lowly original of our nature. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." And when sin had deprived him of the image of God impressed upon this dust; when rebellion had driven him out from the presence of his Maker, condemned to toil and labor, exposed to sorrow and suffering, disease and death, his sentence was so expressed as to remind him, would he but hear it, of his lowly origin. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the ground: for out of it wert thou taken: for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." Here, as in a glass, my friends, we may see our humble origin, and learn how much lower sin hath degraded us; here we may understand that pride was not made for man; that however rich or great, or noble or wise, it is in fact but earth and dust in its short progress to dust again; that however fair, or beauteous, or lovely, it is but a clod of the valley clothed with flowers, which shall wither and fade like the grass of the field; and that however imposing the exterior may be, if not quickened and renewed by the Spirit of Christ, the greatest and the fairest among us is not only the prey of death, but outcast from God and fuel for everlasting burnings.

But it is in the effect of sin upon the soul that the word of God is most express in pointing out its deadly consequences —that it separated it for ever from all communion and intercourse with its maker—that it obliterated every divine and heavenly impression stamped on it by its Creator, when it came forth at his bidding "very good," to inhabit the body

prepared for it; and though immortal in its nature, became so depraved and perverted as to relish only the perishing delights of time and sense. Hear the witness of the SPIRIT OF GOD to this humbling truth. "GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The earth also was corrupt before GOD, and the earth was filled with violence; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek GOD? Every one of them is gone back, they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no not one." "There is no fear of GOD before their eyes." "The fool hath said in his heart there is no GOD." "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will reprove thee, and set thy wickedness in order before thine eyes." Thus, before the flood, and under the Old Testament dispensation after it, is there one unvarying testimony to the inherent depravity of fallen man; and the history we have of his conduct, both in the Scriptures and elsewhere, proves that it is a true and faithful witness.

But, is there no difference, it may be asked, under the gospel, under the "grace and truth which came by JESUS CHRIST?" Alas! no. He is yet the same creature, sprung from the same corrupt root, and brings with him into the world the same mortal taint and infection. Hear him who knew what is in man, and poured out his soul unto death to redeem him from eternal death. "There is none good but one, that is GOD." 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh.' "Except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of GOD.' 'The carnal mind is enmity against GOD, for it is not subject to the law of GOD, neither indeed can be.' 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the SPIRIT OF GOD, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of GOD." Now let me ask, are these the true sayings of GOD? If they are, their influence is this moment at work in this congregation, and the spirit of every self-righteous sinner present rises against them, and is contriving to elude the verdict of conscience in their favor.

But you do it at your peril, for it proves the very point I am striving to bring home to your hearts. O that GOD would be pleased to open them, that the truth may not prove the savor of death unto death.

It may be said, however, that these are allegorical expressions, not to be taken according to the strictness of the letter, but with the necessary allowances for the florid and figurative style of Eastern writings. But in such case, of what value or authority would the Scriptures be, as the fixed and only rule of faith and practice? Who does not see, that on this principle all dependence on Scripture is done away? Heaven and hell may be an allegory, as well as these revolting but saving truths. To try this subterfuge of unbelief, pride, and self-righteousness, by the only safe rule, let us, in the

II. Second place, hear the confessions and acknowledgments of all holy men in all ages.

To begin with Job, who certainly confided more in the righteousness of his life, for the assurance of GOD's favor, than could be allowed under the light of the gospel. What is the testimony of this approved man to this point: "How should man be just with GOD? If he will contend with him he cannot answer him one of a thousand, how much less shall I answer him, and choose out my words to reason with him whom though I were righteous yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge. If I justify myself mine own month shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect yet would I not know my soul, I would despise my life. If I wash myself with snow water and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch and mine own clothes shall abhor me. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. How, then, can man be justified with GOD? Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not, yea, the stars are not pure in his sight, how much less man, that is a worm, and the son of man which is a worm?" And at the close of his trial, when it pleased GOD to turn his mourning into rejoicing, and make a clearer manifestation of himself to his righteous servant, what was the effect? Deeper

humiliation and self-abasement. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

What is the confession of David, the man after GOD's own heart, an inspired prophet, and a type of the Messiah: "Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." "Who can tell how oft he offendeth." "O cleanse thou me from my secret faults." "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O LORD, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

What acknowledgment doth Daniel make in this behalf—a man whom his very enemies admitted they could find no occasion against, unless they found it concerning the law of GOD. "O LORD the great and dreadful GOD, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments, we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and thy judgments."

What saith John the Baptist, who was more than a prophet, and sanctified with the HOLY GHOST from his mother's womb. "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" What is St. Paul's confession? "I know that in me dwelleth no good thing." And though he could say, that touching the righteousness which is in the law, that is, the outward morality of his life, he was blameless—"yet what things were gain to me," says he, "those I counted loss for CHRIST. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my LORD, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win CHRIST, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of CHRIST, the righteousness which is of GOD by faith."

What is the acknowledgment of St. John, the beloved disciple? "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

And what is the confession of every true Christian from that day to this? "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."

Now, then, let me ask, is there any thing allegorical or figurative in these plain and direct confessions of sin, original and actual, and of the utter worthlessness of every thing that can be done by a fallen, imperfect creature, to propitiate and please a just and perfect GOD? No, it is matter of fact and of experience, as is ready to be testified by every Christian present. How, then, shall those escape who resist such conclusive testimony, and refuse a righteousness perfect and complete, provided for them by the mercy of GOD, in CHRIST JESUS? O flee to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope—tarry not in the plain, however pleasant it may appear—and look not behind you, neither turn back to gather up the filthy rags of your own righteousness—they will but encumber your flight, and mar your progress to the city of refuge.

III. For, thirdly, the actual condition of all present is such as to prove beyond dispute, that in our own righteousness we cannot stand the severity of GOD's judgment.

To satisfy you on this point, let us first consider what that GOD is, whom we have thus to meet. Now can any of you, even the wisest among you, tell me any thing of his nature and attributes, by a knowledge of your own? How, then, are we to know any thing of him, unless by revelation? And what, in this respect, says the true and faithful witness, who was with him from the beginning, and hath plainly showed us of the Father? Pure, holy, perfect, and unchangeable; who cannot behold iniquity, or look upon sin with the least degree of allowance—yet gracious and merciful, compassionate and long-suffering—not willing that any should perish. Do you require a proof of his hatred of sin? Behold him exacting from his only Son, as our representative, the penalty due to it, as the sole condition of its pardon. Do you want one of his loving kindness and tender mercy? Behold it in his "so loving the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." But what is sin? Sin is the transgression of the unchangeable law of this pure and holy being, in any of its literal or spiritual requirements. "Cursed is every one that continueth not, in all things written in the Book of the Law, to do them."

And now let us all view ourselves in the glass of this Holy

Law—do we perfectly fulfil either of the two great commandments, into which all the others are resolvable, in the love of GOD and our neighbor? Do we love the glorious GOD and Father of the spirits of all flesh, with all our heart, and soul, and strength, without abatement or intermission? Do we love our neighbor as ourselves? Has selfishness, hatred, or envy no part in us? If to neither of these we can answer a word, but must all lay our hands upon our mouths, what possible ground can there be for the self-righteous delusion, under which so many are posting to the consuming fire of GOD's righteous judgment?

But it will be said, GOD does not now require perfect unsinning obedience from us. What! GOD not require perfect obedience from those who proudly stand in their own righteousness? Why, what saith the law? "The man that doeth these things shall live by them." But what if he doeth them not? "The soul that sinneth it shall die." But to come a little closer yet. Have you committed one sin; have you taken the name of GOD in vain; have you profaned his day of holy rest and privileged worship? Have you given way to hatred or revenge; have you defrauded or exacted; have you lusted or coveted; and this even in thought; what becomes of you? Where is your boasted righteousness? But we repent of our sins, and are sorry for them, you will say. But I say, that without faith in CHRIST you do a needless work, and one that will profit you nothing; for there is no room left for repentance in the law itself; nor, from the very nature of the thing, can there be provision of mercy, in favor of the violater of it, in any law, divine or human. Such a provision would nullify it as a law, and invite to the breach of what it forbids. Mercy and means to undo wrong must be sought for elsewhere. But did not CHRIST die for us, and redeem human nature from the curse under which it labored? Yes. "Blessed be the merciful GOD, who freely delivered him for us all—that he by the grace of GOD should taste death for every man." But let me ask, does the name of CHRIST act like a charm, and save those who never have recourse to it, as set forth in the gospel—who are such righteous, good sort of people, that they do not need his interposition but in part? Oh! what a cruel and desperate disease, is this deep-rooted

and wide-spread propensity in our fallen nature, to be in whole or in part our own saviours. How does it cast contempt on the gospel of our salvation, and make the blood of CHRIST a needless thing! How does it bar up the door of our hearts, against the entrance of that conviction of our sinful, lost, and undone condition, which alone makes CHRIST precious to the believer! How does it stupify, and stifle, and drown the wholesome convictions of the HOLY SPIRIT, as belonging only to the very profligates of our race! Did it not thus act on the self-righteous Pharisees, my hearers, who rejected the preaching, both of John and of our Saviour, while the Publicans and harlots pressed into the kingdom of GOD before them? Oh! how many estimable persons, how many dear and precious souls, are dreaming out their day of grace, under this delusion—turning aside the arrows of GOD's true and faithful word, and crying "peace, peace, when there is no peace." How many are indolently resting on the general proclamation of the gospel, for mercy with GOD, through JESUS CHRIST, who have not even taken the first step towards securing that mercy, by professing his religion, confessing his name before men, and partaking of the ordinances he hath appointed in his Church, who are, in fact, afraid and ashamed of the self-denials these things draw after them, but never think of the awful threatening—"Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, in an adulterous and sinful generation, of him will I be ashamed before my Father and the Holy Angels." O thou, who art thus sleeping, "awake, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST shall give thee light." Hear him calling to the ends of the earth to come unto him, and be saved. Hear him declaring, that whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out. Be no longer faithless, but believing—for unto thee is the word of this salvation sent. But come as a sinner, for he also declares that he "came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance"—for the sick only have need of the physician.

And let not the plain and unadorned manner in which I have endeavored to set before you the mortal disease, under which we all labor, my hearers, revolt you against the wholesome warning. To speak smooth things, and to prophesy deceits, might please more, perhaps, for the little hour you

were listening; but what, then, becomes of your souls and my own? How deep and loud would your curses be upon me, when together we shall prove the truth or falsehood of this doctrine, in the great day of Eternity; but how much deeper the curse of GOD upon my soul, for healing the hurt of the daughters of his people slightly; and, as the LORD'S watchman, failing to warn the wicked from his way. GOD being my helper, your blood shall not be required at my hand. I might, indeed, have set before you the rich mercy of GOD in CHRIST JESUS to his creatures, or I might have expatiated upon the joys and glories which await the righteous in the presence of GOD, and been to you "as the sound of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well upon an instrument." But such is our miserable condition, that, until convinced that we need mercy, we spurn the offer: and the glories of heaven are prepared for those only "who, by faith, are made the righteousness of GOD in him whom GOD hath made to be sin for us;" for those who, born from above, bring forth the fruits of their heavenly birth, in all holiness of life and godliness of conversation, and, overcoming the world by faith in the SON of GOD, shall be accounted worthy to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. But to this the righteousness of the creature is an insuperable bar, and as surely excludes from the Paradise of GOD as the flaming sword of the cherubim kept the way of the tree of life from our fallen first parents.

Suffer, then, the word of exhortation; take its leading truth to your private meditations and prayers; bring it to the law and to the testimony in the word of life; and may that light which is the life of men shine into your hearts and guide you to light and glory eternal.

And you, my Christian brethren, who know and confess "that in the LORD only have we righteousness and strength," whose constant cry is, "not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy great name be given the glory and the praise;" cease not to strive together in your prayers to GOD, for these, your brethren, and with them in your lives—letting your light so shine before men that all may take knowledge of you that you have been with JESUS. Strengthen not the self-righteous delusion under which they labor, by such conform-

ity to the world, in any of its pursuits or pleasures, as shall bring down the difference between you to a mere name. Alas the day! when a Christian has to sound a trumpet before him, to tell what he is; for though it is no excuse to them, yet is it a reproach to that holy name by the which ye are called, and strengthens the unbelief of those who seek occasion against the gospel. Remember that it is not crying LORD, LORD, that will open the gate of eternal life to you, but the doing the will of your father which is in heaven. Remember that feelings and fervors are not fruits, and that every tree which beareth not good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Let your fruit, then, be unto holiness, that the end may be everlasting life.

"Now the GOD of peace, that brought again from the dead our LORD JESUS, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through JESUS CHRIST, to whom be glory for ever and ever. AMEN."

SERMON IV.

DANGER OF BEING HARDENED IN SIN.

HEBREWS iii. 13, last clause.

Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

The words immediately connected with my text, are the following:

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be, in any of you, an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living GOD. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

We learn from them, that all sin is a departure from the living GOD—a separation of ourselves from his service because we prefer another master. That this separation from GOD, in becoming the servants of sin, proceeds from unbelief —from the want of a serious and full persuasion of the heart, that the promises and threatenings of Almighty GOD, revealed in his word, are actually his fixed and unchangeable purpose. And it is called an evil heart of unbelief, because it is a wilful rejection of the plainest declarations and most undeniable testimony that can be made and given; nothing being more certain than that the wrath of GOD is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men, and that this revelation is in our hands by the gospel. Against this the apostle cautions Christians to take heed, that is, to be on their guard, for themselves, and to exhort each other continually, as against a danger very artful and insidious in its commencement and progress, and most destructive in its consequences.

A common danger and a common duty, therefore, my brethren, will engage us all, I trust, in exertions for the common benefit. For the direction here given is the same in substance with the old commandment—"Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour and not suffer sin upon him;" and is, in the truest and highest sense, a fulfilling of the new commandment—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

That we may the better understand the ground and reason of this duty, I will endeavor to explain,

First, what is meant by being hardened in sin.

Secondly, I will point out what are the causes of men's growing hardened in sin.

Thirdly, I will show how insufficient these causes are to excuse their guilt.

Lastly, I shall enforce the obligation of my text upon Christians, to mutual encouragement and assistance in working out their salvation.

"Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

I. First, to explain what is meant by being hardened in sin.

Being hardened in sin undoubtedly means, in this connexion, the being shut up and concluded under the power and dominion of sin, or, as it is otherwise expressed, the being given over to a reprobate mind; and it is against this awful condition, as the final result of sin indulged and persisted in, that the apostle utters his warning. Hence we learn, my friends, that there is a progression in the finally impenitent character, increasing in danger and malignity as we continue to disregard the warnings and admonitions of the word of God, of our friends, and of our consciences; and we also learn, that the inevitable consequence of sin persisted in, is the destruction of the moral sense and of all hope or capacity of salvation.

But as there are degrees or grades in this hardening, it is against these, in every stage, that we are exhorted to be on our guard, and to caution one another.

Of these degrees, a thoughtless yet criminal unconcern on the subject of religion is the lowest; it is also the most frequent; and if not arrested by serious reflection, by the admonition of friends, or by some startling Providence, continues gradually to plunge men deeper into unbelief. In such persons we may remark a strange inattention to every thing connected with religion, a disregard of the clearest evidence and arguments in favor of it, and a prodigality of youth, of health, and fortune, in the dissipations or pursuits of the world, as if they had not time, even if they had the inclination, to listen to any thing in behalf of their souls.

This primarily thoughtless unconcern, however, is, before long, succeeded by a perverseness of temper which not only neglects but resents admonition, and may be considered as the next stage in the process of hardening. The deceitful influence of sin has gradually overcome that levity of mind which distinguishes the youthful novice in the ways of vice, and trained him up to regard whatever is opposed to his course, as an enemy; and here begins that strain of infidel objection to revelation, that proud entertainment of doubt as to its truth, certainty, and importance, which disfigures so many minds evidently intended for better things, and is so fruitful in gaining proselytes from less gifted but equally passion-driven followers of the flesh and of the mind. The word of God, they well know, is unrelentingly opposed to all that they delight in. It must, therefore, be invalidated in some way; and to the love of sin, my hearers, we owe every effort against the Scriptures. Never was there yet an infidel, but from the love of sin in some of its many deceits.

From this state of opposition to truth and reason, the progress is rapid to the last stage of hardness and impenitency. To that fixed love of what is directly immoral, that aversion to every thing of a religious nature, that stubborn, callous disposition, which is alike impenetrable to the fear or the favor of Almighty God, which is described in Scripture as "having the understanding darkened and the mind blinded," as "being past feeling, and reprobate to every good work," as "given over to vile affections, to work all uncleanness with greediness," as "being sold under sin."

This it is to be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, according to the Scriptural meaning of that expression; and as we have instances of this wretched condition continually before our eyes, not only in actual outbreaking wickedness, but in the equally fatal influence of some master sin, occupying the heart against God, nothing further needs be said either to point it out or to explain it.

II. Secondly, I am to point out to you the causes of men's growing hardened in sin.

The first cause or occasion of our being drawn into sin is, our natural frailty, and the temptations to which we are exposed. The one is the consequence of our fallen condition;

the other is a necessary attendant on a state of trial. It is the allurement of temptations from without and of passions from within, therefore, which, properly speaking, form the deceitfulness of sin. Deceit, we all know, is the promise, in some way, of enjoyment or advantage, which is not made good; and in this view sin is the completest deception that was ever played off upon rational beings. For in its very highest attainments there is no perpetuity, and even what gratification there is, is sooner or later followed by disappointment, suffering, and remorse.

We are surrounded by various enticements to evil, and the weakness of our fallen nature and the wilfulness of inordinate desire is too prone to comply with them. The oftener we do so the more do we increase their strength; the less able and the less willing do we become to resist them. Custom in sin silences the conscience, habit becomes inveterate, so that, as the Scripture expresses it, "we cannot cease from sin," till at length we may truly be said to be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, deluded by it and besotted to it, stupidly regardless of our real good, deaf to admonition, impatient of restraint.

The next cause of men's continuing in sin is, the custom of the world and the frequency of example.

Experience teaches us, my hearers, that the oftener we commit any sin ourselves, or see it committed by others, the more indifferent does it grow to us; we are too quickly accustomed to it, and, in no long time, shake off that fear and alarm which all, more or less, feel at first. We become familiarized to sin; it is a school in which we are apt scholars, and take our degrees with great applause. This miserable delusion is encouraged in various ways—"evil communications corrupt good manners:"—but the most common is, the strange notion that the evil is not great because we are no worse than our neighbors, perhaps not so bad as some of them; as if the being countenanced by companions could lessen guilt, or the number of criminals either decrease crime or lighten its punishment. Hence it comes to pass, that whatever offence against the law of God is most common is least censured, while another, no more sinful and blame-worthy, is marked with infamy only because less frequent and less familiar.

A third means of becoming hardened in sin is, a false and unscriptural notion of the mercy of God.

This, my brethren and hearers, is, undoubtedly, the most fertile delusion which Satan ever invented to deceive rational beings to their ruin. Clemency and compassion form so conspicuous a part of the character of the Deity, as revealed to us, that we are apt to forget his other attributes; and this is increased by the propensity of our nature to consider as actually such, what we greatly desire should be so. In such case temptation finds us more than half overcome, our fallen nature is on the side of the enemy; and when this is encouraged by the hope of impunity, sin prevails to the establishment of its dominion over us. "The wish is father to the thought," and we are soon persuaded to risk even eternity on so slender a foundation; and I am sure that I have only to appeal to the hearts of all present for the proof of this powerful cause of men's becoming hardened in sin.

In the fourth place, we become hardened in sin by faint, irresolute, procrastinated promises and purposes of amendment.

Next to unauthorized trust in God's mercy this that I have just mentioned is the great betrayer of the souls of men into a state of confirmed sinfulness; and the reason is perfectly obvious. There is a close connexion between guilt and uneasiness of mind. The sinner, until thoroughly hardened, feels and betrays this uneasiness, and to escape from it he resorts to the compromise of future repentance; thus lulling and blinding his conscience, while the enemy is daily drawing closer around him those cords of everlasting misery and despair which await the sinner who thus trifles with the awakenings of the Holy Spirit and the long suffering mercy and revealed wrath of Almighty God.

Lastly, that which completes the hardening power of sin, and shows that it has full dominion over body and soul, is, denying religion, scoffing at its sanctions, and becoming advocates for infidelity.

When men have lived in such a manner that they have every thing to fear, and nothing to hope, from religion, their only resource is to treat it as a forgery—to give importance to every objection against it—that they may obtain some

present relief against the remembrance of those sins, which yet they are determined not to forsake. And herein, my brethren and hearers, is showed the concluding power of sin persisted in, to harden the heart and close up every avenue to pardon and peace.

The religion of the gospel denounces the wrath of God, for ever, against sin; and, at the same time, offers to the sinner the means of escape from this unalterable curse. This the resolved sinner knows—throughout his whole course of rebellion against God it has repeatedly been pressed upon him—but he would not hear; and in the last struggle of the Holy Spirit with him for his soul, it is again presented to his thoughts. But so hardened has he become, that the only medicine which can heal him is rejected, is scoffed at, and vilified as a cheat and imposition—as a contrivance of priestcraft, to deprive men of their liberty, and make them the slaves and the dupes of superstition and fraud. As St. Jude expresses it—"Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

III. Thirdly, I am to show you how insufficient these causes are to excuse their guilt.

Nothing is more frequently or freely resorted to, as an excuse for sin, than our natural frailty and the strength of temptation. But, that it forms no reasonable justification of transgression, will abundantly appear from the following considerations.

No single instance can be mentioned, in which we are under the necessity of following any passion or inclination, beyond its lawful bounds. Whatever the temptation may be, every man must be conscious that he has power over the outward act, at the least; and, therefore, giving way to temptation, especially at the beginning, is a voluntary act. Indeed, until the conscience has become deadened by the effects of sin, no man ever commits a wicked or even a foolish action without wishing he had not done it, and condemning himself for so doing, which proves his consciousness that he had power to refrain from it, and that he ought to have exerted it.

Again, it is the result of observation and experience, that men are restrained from many crimes by the laws of their country, by respect for particular characters, by the fear of disgrace, and the dread of present punishment. Now this undeniably shows, that no necessity to sin is laid upon any man, and, therefore, that all wickedness is voluntary, and justly charged as our own act.

Once more, admitting the most that can be desired in excuse for sin from the frailty of our nature and the power of temptation, it will avail us nothing before our judge, because he has provided and offered the assistance of his grace to supply our weakness, in the strength whereof all temptation is powerless. If, therefore, we neglect or refuse to apply for this help, we are doubly guilty—not only guilty of the sinful act, but guilty of slighting that offered and effectual help through which temptation could have been resisted and overcome.

Let no man, therefore, pretend to excuse his sin by the strength of the temptation which led to it. God will not suffer us to be tempted beyond the provision he has made for us to resist it. Therefore, if we yield, we dishonor God, both by distrusting and disobeying him; if we can withstand temptation in some cases, we may in all; if human laws can control sinful actions, much more ought the laws of God to hold them in subjection; if the presence of an earthly superior can control and check the vicious and the profligate in their behaviour, the consideration that the eye of heaven is continually upon us, ought to be a much more powerful restraint upon rational beings; if the laws, and the judges, and the prisons, and the gibbets of this world are of force to deter criminals from their evil works, what should be the restraining power of the law, and the judge, and the prison, and the sentence, and the execution of eternity? Oh! what an audacious criminal is the gospel sinner, who wilfully sets at nought both the fear of man and the power of God.

Equally unfounded is the excuse made for sin, from the custom of the world and the frequency of bad example.

If the guilt of sin decreased in the ratio that the numbers committing sin increased, there would be some sense and reason in giving way to such a course. Indeed, it would be

the interest of every man to hasten into sin, in order to reduce the amount as low as possible; but as such an imagination is a complete absurdity, so is the excuse for sin, from custom and example, as complete a folly. Sin can neither lose its character nor be separated from its consequences by combinations in its favor, any more than the plague can become less dangerous and mortal in proportion as those infected with it increase in number.

Again, if fellowship in suffering lessened the pain of individual torment, the folly of deriving encouragement to sin, or of feeling quiet and unconcerned under the practice of it, from the custom and example of the world, would be less intolerable. But when reason and experience both convince us that it is not so; when the analogy of present pain certifies to our senses, that individual anguish is in no degree mitigated by one or by one hundred others suffering at the same time, or in the same manner, with ourselves; this dangerous deceit of sin should be abandoned as a snare to our souls.

And, further, if the fallacy, that numbers in the same condemnation will have a favorable effect on the sentence of the judge, has found any place in our thoughts, it ought at once to be abandoned, when we reflect that "God hath no need of the sinful man," and has solemnly declared, "that though hand join in hand yet shall not the wicked go unpunished."

In like manner, my brethren and hearers, of that most extensive delusion in favor of the deceitfulness of sin, unfounded reliance upon the mercy of God, which is exactly what St. Paul describes by "continuing in sin that grace may abound."

It is undoubtedly a ground of the most solid comfort to know, that the world is under the government of a wise, omnipotent, and good being, "whose tender mercies are over all his works;" but as a bad use may be made of the best things, and the plainest truths may be perverted or misapplied, we should be very careful not to deceive ourselves by wrongly considering the divine perfections. To confine the Deity to one single attribute, or, what is the same thing, to exalt one in such wise as to supersede the exercise of the others in his dealings with his creatures, is to deprive him of that without which he could neither be a wise governor or a righteous judge. Rewards and punishments are equally necessary in

the government of moral creatures; we are sensible of their good effects in the present life, and must believe them equally necessary as regards the life that is to come. A righteous God must punish the wicked, or be unjust to himself and to the righteous. The vindication of his truth requires it, as well as the honor of his holy law, broken by sinners; besides, how unlimited soever we conceive his mercy to be, still it has its rule in the application. It can, therefore, only be applied to capable subjects, and as impenitent sinners are not of that number, they can never taste of it. The mercy of God is revealed for our comfort and encouragement; its object is, to lead us to repentance, not to confirm us in sin; and unless it produces this effect, it will but the more deeply condemn us. It was purchased by the blood of Christ, poured out upon the cross, and it is revealed that God may be feared and not sported with.

The folly and unreasonableness of putting off till some future time, that repentance and amendment of life, which is indispensable to pardon of sin and acceptance with God, will be evident, I trust, from the following considerations:

The intention to repent and amend the life at some future time, is an acknowledgment, that in whole or in part, it is at present wrong, and contrary to the known will of God. To delay, then, is, of set purpose, wilfully and deliberately to affront the Almighty, by professing to intend that, which, nevertheless, we do not mean to comply with. In truth, for the time reserved, it is an unqualified preference of sin, incompatible with any sincere intention of ever forsaking it, and as such, a most frequent cause of being given over to hardness of heart. For, if it be necessary and right to repent and amend, it can never be either necessary or right to put off so important a work. If sin be justly liable to the wrath of God, it must be the more so the longer it is persisted in. If repentance is now irksome to think of and difficult to commence, will it not become more irksome and difficult through the inveterate power of sin, more and more confirmed by delay? May not God be provoked to cut you off, and death overtake you and prevent your purpose, even if it be real? Now all this is very possible, and very dreadful to think of; yet it has happened to thousands, and there is no reason can be given,

nor any assurance offered, why it may not happen to every delaying sinner present, who is in this wise parleying with destruction.

As to the last resort of the resolved sinner, in renouncing religion and becoming the advocate of infidelity, words are insufficient to express the greatness of his folly. For by this he completely shuts the door against hope for ever, there being hope for the sinner no where but in the gospel.

The highest stretch of thought, the most unbounded imagination of the nature and properties of the Supreme Being, which man can indulge, present no hope, can draw no conjecture even, of what awaits us after death, without aid from Revelation. The infidel, therefore, or rejector of the gospel, for they are the same, does in fact extinguish, as to himself, the light of life; and all that he can possibly gain by it is, relief for the present from the fear of hell. This is the very utmost—but with this, remember, he renounces any possible expectation of heaven, and thus brings his being down to a level with the beasts that perish. But, my hearers, there is such a thing as religion, let who will disbelieve it. There are such places as heaven and hell, in spite of all the efforts of all the infidels that have been since Adam. Yes, and there are such things as death and judgment too, to which the hardiest unbeliever must come, as well as the humblest Christian. And there are everlasting burnings for sin, which infidels cannot quench, and eternal joys for righteousness, which neither unbelievers nor devils can deprive them of, and which these shall never taste. Well, then, is it enjoined upon Christians, to exhort one another continually against the deceitfulness of sin, and the following arguments may serve to enforce this duty, and as an application of the subject.

In whatever light the careless and the thoughtless, the young and the gay, the libertine and the infidel, may choose to view sin—to the Christian it presents but one aspect. To him it is the thing which God abhors, which he has expressly forbidden, and will everlastingly punish. To him it is the cause of all the misery that is in this world, both to himself and to others; and will be the cause of all the horror and despair which the finally impenitent must endure for ever in the torments of hell. If, therefore, he is worthy of the name

of Christian, if he possesses a spark of that benevolence and good will towards his fellow creatures, which is the spirit of religion, he will not remain listless and unconcerned for the multitudes of immortal souls all around him, who are madly driving down the broad and beaten road of everlasting destruction. He will not be content with his example merely, but, by every prudent and affectionate remonstrance and persuasion—by every argument of reason and religion, will endeavor to prevail with those he has access to or influence over, to see their danger and to escape from it.

Another consideration to enforce this duty upon Christians is, that their own experience both entitles and enables them to perform it with effect.

The Christian is obliged to know something of sin and its deceits, from dear-bought experience. He must have felt its strength, detected its cunning, proved its misery, and learned how to resist and overcome its power. Upon whom then more properly can this duty be laid, than upon those who are thus qualified by experience, to warn, exhort, and instruct others —who are prompted by feeling, and furnished with knowledge, to guide the unwary and inexperienced, through the snares and pit-falls of temptation, acting upon depraved and unmastered passions.

A third argument to enforce this duty, is to be drawn from the returns the Christian owes to his God and Saviour, for his own deliverance from the deceitfulness and power of sin.

"We love him because he first loved us," says every true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. But, "if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar," says the apostle, "for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" What higher proof, then, can be given of hatred, that is, of unconcern for, of indifference to our brother, on the one hand—or of love, that is, of regard for, of affectionate interest in him, on the other, than the neglect or performance of this Christian duty. Moreover, Christians pray continually, "thy kingdom come." But the kingdom of God is the reign of righteousness, the prevalence of true religion, which can only come to pass by the defeat and destruction of sin, in its power over man.

Do we, then, wish our prayers to be heard and answered?

Do we truly desire the present and eternal welfare of our children, relations, brethren, friends, and fellow-creatures?—Are we in earnest working out our own salvation? Let us remember, my brethren, that it is an indispensable part of it "to exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy—to the only wise God our Saviour—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

SERMON V.

WICKEDNESS THE CAUSE OF BLINDNESS.

DANIEL xii. 10, *latter part.*

And none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.

Whether we consider these words as an elucidation of an effect by assigning its cause, or as an appointment of that wisdom which ruleth over all, their importance to us is just the same, my brethren. Their truth is confirmed by observation and experience of human conduct, and the warning and instruction to be drawn from them is directly practical. Opposition to the gospel is here assigned to its true cause, the wickedness of man, and an opposite conduct is set forth as the consequence of a serious consideration of revealed truth.

The improvement I shall endeavor to make of the text, therefore, will be, to show, by some examples, how it comes to pass that the practice of wickedness shuts the understanding against the reception of divine truth. And on the other hand, wherefore it is, that a virtuous life disposes the mind to receive and the heart to embrace the gospel, and, then, conclude with some practical inferences from the subject.

"And none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."

I. First, I am to show by some examples, how it comes to pass, that the practice of wickedness shuts the understanding against the reception of divine truth.

With whatever variety of natural disposition we may come into the world, my brethren, (and I am disposed to think that it is very great,) as fallen creatures, our ultimate character will depend entirely upon the care and pains taken to form it. That the seeds of sin manifest themselves very early in all, is, unhappily, too true, and, therefore, the greater responsibility is laid upon those who have the care and charge of young persons committed to them. For though the cor-

ruptions of our nature manifest themselves from the first, yet the rich provision of divine grace, giving effect to careful instruction, watchful restraint, and judicious correction, is fully competent to subdue and root out those corruptions, to cherish and mature good dispositions, and fortify the mind to resist the temptations and perfect the virtues of active life. And even where this has been neglected, there is yet no excuse or license for wickedness; for when reason is matured and men undertake the direction of their own actions, it is incumbent on them to reflect upon the end they have in view, on the just purposes of the present life, and on the unspeakable interests of the life that is to come. These are proper subjects for the exercise of the rational faculties, and are in such a sense duties of the highest obligation that there is no accountable being who does not, in some way, and to some extent, pass them in review. And though the difficulty and the danger of making a wise choice is greatly enhanced by the previous neglect, yet the same divine grace is still present to lend its salutary and effectual aid in favor of religion and virtue. The practice of wickedness, then, is always matter of choice, and hence it is that the wicked and the righteous are contrasted in the text and throughout the Scriptures by the folly or the wisdom of their respective pursuits. "None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand."

This is fully exemplified in the profligate and debauched of all ages. However acute their understandings may be in other things, however well informed their minds may be in general, yet on this subject it is literally true, that they have eyes and see not, ears have they yet they hear not, and hearts but they understand not. The natural, indeed the inevitable tendency of a vicious disposition is, to corrupt the principles and subvert the judgment. Spiritual things cannot be discerned, however clearly propounded; and having lost all relish for any thing above sense, the claims and the duties, the hopes and the fears, of religion, are foolishness unto them. How often do we see it the case, my hearers, when these high, and holy, and awful things are proposed to such persons, that they can by no means be made to comprehend them, they cannot even be induced to consider them—or, if

they venture to answer, it is in such wise as to show, that they have "become vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart is darkened."

But, further, the love of sin, and the practice of wickedness, not only blinds men's minds, and hinders them from considering and applying divine truth, but it, moreover, prejudices them against it, and causes them even to hate it, and become its professed enemies. "They hate to be reformed, and, therefore, cast GOD'S words behind them." "Their carnal mind is enmity against GOD, and, therefore, is not subject to the law of GOD, neither indeed can be." The person who gives them the best advice comes to be considered as their enemy, because he tells them the truth. They knowingly "choose darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil," and reject the truth, "because they have pleasure in unrighteousness." Thus the Scriptures describe the effects of resolved outbreaking wickedness, and give a most sufficient reason why none such shall or can understand; and present, at the same time, a most awakening warning to all who, by neglect of religion, are in danger of coming to such a hopeless state of blindness and obstinate rejection of saving truth.

Nothing is more common than for objections to be raised and entertained against religion in general, from some supposed difficulty in understanding it; and we sometimes hear this objection from persons who do not manifest that depraved and vicious disposition which, in the language of the world, is denominated wickedness. It is, nevertheless, very certain, my brethren and hearers, that much depends upon the inward temper of the heart for the attainment of religious knowledge, and still more for the profitable application of it. If, therefore, the heart be occupied exclusively with something alien to GOD, this will constitute such a species of wickedness as will prevent the understanding of divine things.

Of this description are worldly mindedness and covetousness, with all similar descriptions of inordinate affection; and from persons of such characters it is that we most commonly hear this objection. But did they consider the subject with any seriousness, they must soon perceive that the difficulty is with themselves, and not in religion.

The covetous man has set up an idol in his heart, which usurps the place due to Almighty God; and the worship paid to this false god absorbing all the faculties, the mind becomes blinded to the light of divine truth, and this inordinate affection actually swallows up all others. Hence St. Paul calls covetousness idolatry, and points out its invariable effect in perverting the understanding on the vital subject of religion. "If our gospel be hid," says he, that is, be difficult to understand, "it is hid to them that are lost." A better rendering of the words would be, through the things which perish. "In whom"—rather, by which—"the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them." On this as well as on other accounts, he styles the love of money "the root of all evil." Our Lord also cautions his disciples against this vice—"Take heed," says he, "and beware of covetousness."

In like manner, the effect is nearly the same through over-engagement with the lawful business of life. When the farms and the merchandise of the world occupy the place which the honor of God and the care of our souls ought to possess, the life and power of religion is unknown—its forms and its decencies may be kept up, but we understand it not—the heart is gone after its covetousness, and no room is left for the Giver of every good and perfect gift. Hence our Saviour's strong admonitions against over-carefulness and anxiety about worldly accommodations—"Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Another branch of that wickedness which perverts the understanding on the subject of religion, and blinds the mind to the beauty of holiness, is found in that levity and thoughtlessness of youth, which is yet free from the grossness of outbreaking profligacy and vice. Persons of this description are a most numerous body, my hearers, and the effect is evidenced by the comparatively small number of youth who manifest any concern for their souls; which surely would not be the case, were it not for the inevitable consequences of carelessness and unconcern on the subject of religion, to every

period of accountable age. The honor of God and the care of the soul being the highest duties of rational beings, the neglect of them comes very properly under the general denomination of wickedness. Hence, such persons are described in Scripture as "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" —as "dead while they live"—as "idlers, wandering about from house to house,"—and the effects are such as to "increase unto "more ungodliness." For as the mind is dissipated in the frivolous nothings of folly and fashion, it gradually becomes more and more indisposed to, indeed incapable of, serious thought; and all that relates to religion grows more irksome and uninteresting, until it ceases to affect the mind at all.

From these examples, though briefly detailed, we may learn, I think, the meaning of the text, in describing, as it does, the effect of every kind of wickedness, in blinding the mind and blunting the feelings to the great concerns of eternity; and be furnished with a most persuasive argument to escape from so imminent a danger, before sin hath bound us to our ruin with a chain which cannot be broken. For in addition to the natural effects of the love and practice of sin, God threatens to withdraw his Holy Spirit from "such as go on in their wickedness—to deliver them over to a reprobate mind—to send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Whoever, therefore, feels disposed to escape from the duties of religion, and to take shelter under the objection that it is difficult to understand, let him thereby be warned that there is something greatly wrong within him—that he is deluded by some deceit of sin, which, unless it be detected and put away, will blind him still more. And this is certainly the cause of all opposition and objection to the gospel. For no fair mind can possibly object to the philanthropy and morality of the gospel. No reasonable mind can reject the proofs by which it is confirmed as a divine revelation. No teachable disposition will refuse to be made wise unto salvation; nor will any sane mind sport with the sanctions of God's righteous judgment. Yet with all this is the person chargeable who refuses himself to the gospel, either through the

levity of youth, the engagements of the world, or the love of sin in its licentious and profligate indulgences. In all these cases, however great their variety, "the wicked shall not understand," both from the natural tendency of vice and the righteous appointment of GOD in withdrawing his HOLY SPIRIT.

II. Let us, in the next place, examine wherefore it is that a virtuous disposition disposes the understanding to receive and the heart to embrace the gospel. "The wise shall understand."

In the study of every human science there is some previous temper, some particular predisposition of mind, which gives greater aptness, as well as inclination, for that particular science, and enables those thus predisposed, to understand it more readily and to acquire it with more ease, than those not thus inclined. The same holds proportionally true, likewise, in the divine science of religion. A teachable disposition, a well disposed temper, an equitable, fair, and charitable spirit, and a just sense of the necessity and reasonableness of obeying the commands of GOD, is the first principle and beginning of religion—the best preparative to open the understanding, to make men study divine truths with satisfaction—to comprehend them readily, and judge of them rightly. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom," says the Psalmist; "a good understanding have all they that do his commandments; his praise endureth for ever." And our Saviour compares a virtuous disposition to good ground —"Those on the good ground are they who, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." Such persons, also, he elsewhere calls his sheep, and describes them as hearing his voice and following him as their shepherd.

But, further, as the knowledge of any science is only profitable according as it is reduced to practice, in like manner the practice of righteousness is the true and profitable improvement of religious knowledge. As in human sciences the man who applies what he already knows is constantly adding to his knowledge and acquiring more extended and perfect views of that science, so, likewise, in the science of religion, practice and experience in the course of a virtuous

life and in the obedience of God's commandments, continually extend and enlarge the understanding of and capacity for the things of God. "He that keepeth the law of the Lord, getteth the understanding thereof," says the wise son of Sirach. "Evil men understand not judgment; but they that seek the Lord understand all things," says Solomon. "I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts," says David. "If ye continue in my word," says the Saviour, "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Thus, "the wise shall understand." For, in the religion of the gospel there is no man truly wise and knowing but he that lives like a Christian.

But, further, in addition to the natural tendency of a virtuous disposition to lead men to the knowledge and love of divine things, God hath promised the assistance of his Holy Spirit to enlighten and direct all who sincerely desire to know and to do his will. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God. If ye love me keep my commandments; and I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of Truth. And when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." Hence St. John, exhorting Christians against the doctrine of those false teachers who had left the Church, tells them, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you ye shall abide in him."

Thus is the virtuous man secured against all fatal error and furnished for all saving truth, not only by the natural tendency of his pursuits, but by the special appointment of the only wise and just governor of the universe; while the wicked, in all their various shades, by the operation of the righteous and unchangeable constitution of moral causes, are precluded, by their own perverse abuse of common mercies,

from the blessing annexed to them, both here and hereafter. "And none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." Of which words our Saviour himself has given the true and awakening exposition, in his application of the parable of the talents—"For unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath."

From what has been said the following inferences seem plain and obvious, my brethren:

First, the religion of the gospel is not the creature of impulse and feeling, arbitrarily imparted once for all, and to be found most readily where reason and understanding are the farthest removed from their just influence. But it is the happy and enduring fruit of knowledge diligently sought, wisely applied, faithfully improved, and virtuously practised. It is, therefore, a gradual attainment, and as such, requires and is provided with all those means which the goodness of God has prepared and appointed to that end. Now, these means consist of our own exertions and of his grace; to separate them is to deprive ourselves of both. He that would reach heaven in his own strength will never rise, even to the view of its blessed mansions of glory; while he that waits for divine grace, without putting forth the strength already given, and which is to be found in reading, meditation, prayer, and penitence, will wait in vain. God hath no need of the sinful man, therefore he must be sought unto by all such. They must come to him for this blessing, without which we can do nothing, that is, nothing that we can do is of any worth without it. Hence, we are instructed and exhorted "to work out our salvation with fear and trembling;—For it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure."—"To add to our faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity, with all diligence."—"Thus making our calling and election sure."

Secondly, as the continuing to neglect both our duty and our interest, in securing the salvation of our souls, is showed by the text to be followed by increasing blindness and corruption of mind, to the final destruction of all spiritual sense and feeling, it follows, as a most reasonable inference, that all delay to turn from such a ruinous course, is a further

tempting of God, and an undeniable proof of that wickedness which "shall not understand."

All warning, my dear hearers, is given for us to profit by, and our reason is to judge of the just application of that warning. To your reason, then, I appeal, to the sober reason of all present, in whatever degree the text finds you, whether of the thoughtless, the over-engaged, or the actually vicious. Are the pursuits you are occupied with, such as God will approve of and reward hereafter? If they are, if they are such as you can bring to the standard of his word, and find them there approved; yea, further, if they are such as your own experience shows to be profitable for the advancement of spiritual light in your minds and the increase of the power of God over your hearts and lives, then cleave to them, and engage yet more diligently in them; but if they are not, if your own reason and conscience, if the observation and experience of all who are competent to judge, above all, if the word and wisdom of God testifies with these, that they are hourly sinking you deeper into darkness and delusion, hourly carrying you away further from God, from hope, and from happiness; what then—what says reason, what says conscience, what says religion, what say the united voices of the wise and the good in all ages? "Forsake the foolish and live; make no tarrying to turn to the Lord; we have sinned; we have done wickedly, and, therefore, the way of truth is hid from us." And what says the mercy of God to those who turn to him in righteousness? "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And lest this should not be thought warning and encouragement sufficient, by the sin-darkened hearts of a crooked and perverse generation, what says this only begotten Son to all under the gospel? "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;—him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." And what says this merciful Saviour even to the blindness of sin and unbelief? "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall

have the light of life; he that hath ears to hear let him hear;" and he that hath a heart to perceive let him understand; "and whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

"To-day, then, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, but turn unto the LORD and he will have mercy upon you, and to our GOD, for he will abundantly pardon."

SERMON VI.

THE JAILER'S QUESTION TO ST. PAUL.

Acts xvi. 30, latter clause.

"What must I do to be saved?"

Some degree of concern, and even of anxiety, as to the failure or success of important interests, is inseparable, I believe, my brethren, from our present condition. While hope and fear vibrate in uncertainty, the restlessness of insecurity must be felt, and will manifest a corresponding influence upon the thoughts and upon the conduct. That this concern and anxiety is more frequent as well as stronger in degree respecting our temporal than our spiritual interests, is, unhappily, the experience of every Christian land. And while it is acknowledged to be altogether inconsistent with the relative importance of the two interests, but feeble efforts are made to counteract it; and the consequence certainly follows, that it increases in power, and ultimately excludes every spiritual desire and inclination. Now though this is known to be the effect, and notwithstanding the admonitions of Scripture are full and express against undue or misplaced anxiety as to worldly condition, "the things that are seen" prevail over "the things that are not seen," and, in a variety of ways, "blind the minds of them that believe not," to their everlasting ruin. Yet public opinion, as well as private inclination, is disposed to treat this departure from God, or rather this refusal to come to God, leniently, and in the common guilt to lose sight of the common danger; and because some respect can be and is shown to the outward observances of Christianity, and because less of open out-breaking wickedness is perpetrated by the careful and worldly-minded than by the careless and dissolute, therefore the delusion is cherished that the high and holy hope of the gospel may, for such, be relied upon.

There are, however, some minds so overrun with levity and

thoughtlessness, that they appear impenetrable to every thing like serious impression, or continued application. Trifles alone interest them and engage their activity. But of such, no man augurs well, nor is much disposition felt to admit the excuse which may be offered on the ground of natural disposition; it is condemned as inconsistent with either feeling or reflection, and as precluding any reasonable hope of usefulness or success in life. This judgment, I believe, is correct in the general; for experience and observation concur in proving, that until this frivolous, inconsiderate state of mind is cured, the expectation of any thing profitable to themselves or useful to others is hardly to be entertained.

Thus do we reason and decide, my brethren, and correctly too, as regards the interests of time. But wherefore is it, that we stop short of the extent to which this mode of reasoning would carry us—that we are not instructed by the analogy which temporal things bear to those which are eternal, and are not moved thereby to feel the same anxiety, and put forth the same diligence, for the welfare of our souls, which we manifest for that of our bodies? Wherefore do the careful and the thoughtful, and the calculating men of business, condemn the equally busy, though careless and inconsiderate men of pleasure, as it is called? If their pursuits are alike bounded by the present life, wherein do they differ in event, as respects the great purpose of our being? This is the touchstone of all worldly condition—the test of all present occupation to accountable beings—for, surely, when compared with eternity, the gravest as well as the gayest, the weightiest as well as the more trifling pursuits of the world, are alike frivolous and unworthy the exclusive regard of an immortal soul. In the sight of God what matters it, my hearers, whether our hearts are set on business or on pleasure, during the four-score years of our limited pilgrimage? These equally usurp the place which he alone should fill, and they alike militate against the great and declared purpose of his wisdom and mercy in permitting the world to continue, and in granting to its inhabitants opportunity and means to regain the bright inheritance which by sin was forfeited, and escape the condemnation which by sin was incurred. These are considerations which sweep into nothing the anxieties of the care-

ful, and the frivolities of the thoughtless; which conclude, unanswerably, against all false estimates of moral condition, as grounds of hope towards GOD; and, if allowed to operate, force from the convicted conscience the alarmed exclamation of my text—"What must I do to be saved?"

Happy, my brethren, yea, thrice happy for those who, either by some startling providence of GOD or by the equally efficacious and more ordinary method of his grace operating through the written word, are brought to this point, and awakened to their true condition before the dream of life is surprised by the realities of eternity. For if there be a life beyond this present mortal existence, if death do not put a final period to our being, if joy or sorrow, and for ever, too, await us beyond the grave, what equally important inquiry can occupy the attention of accountable beings with that of the condition into which we shall pass when we drop these mortal bodies and enter upon a new and never-ending existence?

From this passage of Scripture, therefore, I will first lay before you some reflections calculated to explain and apply the text, and then give the answer to this anxious and most important inquiry—"What must I do to be saved?"

I. These words, we know, my hearers, were uttered by the jailer of Philippi, on occasion of the midnight earthquake which attended the imprisonment of Paul and Silas, because of the religion which they preached. This was an event very alarming in itself, and, connected with the circumstances which preceded the arrest of the apostle and his companion, well calculated to produce that deep impression of guilty fear, which imminent danger awakens in the conscience of the sinner. The man, indeed, was a Heathen; but he was not, therefore, without those apprehensions of futurity which are inseparable from human nature. The doctrine of those servants of CHRIST had been the subject of attention in the city, and was doubtless known to him. And the miraculous attestation to its truth which the earthquake afforded, produced, at once, full conviction of his danger as a sinner ignorant of GOD and unprepared to meet his righteous judgment; but with hope of deliverance through those heralds of mercy, whose prayers and praises were thus visibly answered.

Are we, therefore, to expect such extraordinary manifesta-

tions of divine power now, my brethren and hearers, in order to awaken men to their danger as sinners, and convert them to God? No, by no means. On the contrary, we know that miraculous interposition has long been withdrawn from the gospel, and that the pretence to it, in any shape, is a mark of Anti-Christ. We also know, that even in the age of miracles all conversions were not thus produced, and the probability is, that such were few in proportion to the whole number of converts to the faith. Of this we have a particular instance in this same city of Philippi, under the same ministers, in the conversion of Lydia, by the ordinary operation of the Holy Spirit, disposing the heart to believe and obey the truth as it is in Jesus.

With the proof of divine origin for Christianity, confirmed by centuries of opposition and success, and with a recorded Scripture, established as the word of God by the highest attestation, men are not now to wait or look for miraculous displays of the Spirit, and those who do, will wait and look in vain for aught but the deceits of an enthusiast's imagination. The providences of God are, indeed, so ordered as to work together with the warning and instruction of his holy word, to lead men to repentance, so great is his mercy to us ward; but independent of this it is now made the duty of all men, every where, to believe the gospel, to acquaint themselves with the will of God, to repent and cease from sin, and to pray earnestly for the light and succor of his Holy Spirit, to make his word life and power to their souls.

The effect of thus obeying the divine precepts is just as certain as the promise of God to bless the means of grace, faithfully used, is sure and unbroken. And if men were only as desirous to be saved as God is that they should be converted in order thereto, the ordinary means of grace would be just as efficient without as with those extraordinary operations, which, after all, derive their whole moral effect from the influence of the Holy Ghost.

The words of the text also suggest to us the hopeless condition of mankind by nature. "What must I do to be saved?" Hence it appears, that in his actual condition the jailer was not saved, that he was made sensible of this, that he considered it a state of great danger, and was prompted to seek

deliverance from it. Now it is very certain that the earthquake could not, of itself, do this. But the discoveries of the gospel, as preached by St. Paul, applied to the conscience by the SPIRIT OF GOD, were fully competent to show the true condition of man as a fallen creature, and of himself as one of that guilty race. Reflection and self-examination could not fail to strengthen this conviction of divine truth, which the earthquake confirmed, by showing him the imminence of his danger, and, by bringing his fears to a point, made him a sincere supplicant for the light of life. The words of the text, then, are not altogether the consequence of fear and alarm, but the result of reflection on previous information, quickened into effect by a visible display of the power of GOD; nor yet are they to be confined to this or to any other extraordinary instance of conversion to GOD, but, either in themselves or in the sentiment which they so strongly express, ought to be the heartfelt language of every child of Adam to whom the word of this salvation is sent.

The leading discoveries of the gospel are, the fall of man by the commission of sin, the corruption of his nature, his consequent separation from GOD and condemnation to death temporal and eternal; and the recovery of this fallen creature by the undertaking of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, his consequent reprieve from the execution of the sentence, with the provision of adequate means for his renewal and sanctification by the gift of the HOLY GHOST. These are the great and momentous truths which are "commanded to be preached among all nations for the obedience of faith," which every man must believe and apply to himself, and from which it follows, that the inquiry of my text must, at some period, be the personal inquiry of all who shall ever come to GOD on the terms of the gospel. As fallen creatures we come into life, my dear hearers; as fallen creatures we shall pass out of this present short and uncertain existence into endless separation from GOD, unless these discoveries of divine mercy are so realized as to convince us of the one truth, in such wise as to bring us to desire the other with all the intensity of a heart that feels its own ruin and hopelessness without help from GOD.

Now, who is here present to whom these discoveries are

not made? who among you is ignorant of these awful truths, and incapable of drawing the just conclusions from them? and which of you knows not, that death and judgment, that heaven and hell, await the use made of them by accountable beings? And yet how few, comparatively, have ever seriously put to themselves the question of my text, have ever followed out the occasional misgivings of their own hearts, the alarms of sickness and danger, and the warnings of the word of GOD, so as to meet fairly, and faithfully to consider, the state of their souls as saved or lost? Under such circumstances, my friends, "why stand ye here all the day idle?" Do you wait for some convulsion of nature, some sign from heaven, to startle you into salvation? Is not the veracity of GOD sufficient for your faith to build the commanded duties of religion upon? sufficient for you to choose "that good part" which, even reason teaches, may be gain and cannot be loss? Is GOD's command to "repent and believe the gospel" of no force without a sign from heaven? O deceive not your own souls, and cloak not your love of sin by pretending an insufficient revelation. Know ye not, that they who continued to require more signs, in the midst of signs and wonders, were left to the hardness of their own deceitful hearts? "A wicked and adulterous generation asketh after a sign, but there shall no sign be given unto it but the sign of the prophet Jonas." And have you not that sign in the death and resurrection of JESUS CHRIST, by virtue of which only, the gospel with all its blessings has come unto you? O beware, lest that come upon you which is written—"Behold ye despisers, and wonder and perish, for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." A work, indeed, shall be wrought in confirmation of the gospel, which you shall see, but it will then be too late to profit by it. An earthquake you shall have, in the convulsions of an expiring world, when the earth and the sea shall give up their dead; a sign from heaven, also, you shall have, in the Son of man coming in the clouds, with power and great glory. How will you then feel, how will you then look back upon the precious opportunities now slighted, and curse the wilful unbelief which has betrayed you to perdition. O let the overwhelming thought now fix the commanding truth

upon your conscience, and occupy your meditations until it draws from your heart the solemn inquiry, "what must I do to be saved?"

For the text, furthermore, suggests the reflection, that there is something to be done on our part, in order to our being saved.

The jailer was conscious that as he was, he was not saved —was not in a state of favor with God—and this very consciousness, as it was the ground of his alarm and inquiry, so was it the entrance to his salvation. Ought not, then, the same consciousness to produce the same effect now, and bring every person who has not a well-grounded Scriptural hope of God's favor through the Lord Jesus Christ, so to doubt the safety of his condition, as to inquire scrupulously into it, holding himself in readiness to forego whatever is in opposition to the gospel, and to embrace whatever it requires? This appears to have been the temper of the jailer, and, surely, it ought to be the disposition of all who, like him, have reason to fear their condition for hereafter to be either dangerous or doubtful. Religion, my dear hearers, the religion of Jesus Christ, is not an abstract speculation of the intellectual faculty, but a system of practical truth for personal observance and improvement? "What must I do to be saved?" What is my particular duty? What am I to learn, and believe, and do, in order to escape everlasting destruction and obtain eternal life? But this is the commencement only—the first fruits of a truly awakened sinner, of a sincere seeker after God, which must be followed up by doing whatsoever is commanded in the gospel. How thoroughly at variance, then, with this active engagement on so high an interest, is the loose indifference of these latter days to the discoveries of the gospel, to the high and holy hope which it gives to man? What thousands and tens of thousands are flattering themselves with the benefit of this hope, who have never resorted to those appointed means of grace by which it is certified and maintained, and have yet to ask themselves the vital question—"What must I do to be saved?" What numbers among ourselves leave this great interest uncared for, while they give themselves without reserve to the world, in its business or in its pleasures. How shall I get rich?

How shall I secure my temporal interests? How shall I compass the pleasures of the world? What shall I eat? what shall I drink? and wherewithal shall I be clothed? are allowed to swallow up the anxieties and pervert the exertions which eternity calls for, and without which it must be miserable and undone.

And wherefore is it thus?—wherefore is it, that beings who can reason, and calculate, and discern, and exert themselves for a present interest, will not apply the same faculties to that which is future, and on surer grounds of success combine them all into one continued effort in working out their everlasting salvation? Alas! it is for the very reason which should constrain them to do otherwise. It is because they are fallen creatures, with corrupt hearts, blinded minds, and perverted desires. It is because they will not receive the truth, even from GOD. Because they will not come to the light which his holy word sheds over their condition, and consider and apply its gracious and glorious discoveries to themselves. It is because they will not pray for the help and succor of the HOLY SPIRIT to lead them to the truth, and make it effectual to the renewal of their hearts. And, above all, it is because they do not cease from sin, but resist the godly motions and admonitions of the HOLY GHOST in their consciences, doing despite to the SPIRIT of grace, and not because they cannot do otherwise, or are not aware that they ought to act otherwise. "This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." No one, under the light of the gospel, can plead ignorance of the will of GOD. No one, under the grace of the gospel, can plead inability to do the will of GOD. His wisdom hath left us all without excuse, my friends, and his command hath made it the first, the highest, the most immediate duty of every soul who hears its joyful sound, to inquire, as for life—"What must I do to be saved?" GOD grant it may be so impressed upon your hearts this day, that we may hear the welcome question from all who have hitherto been negligent of their souls.

II. I come now, as was proposed, to give the answer to the inquiry made in my text.

That it is in our power to answer it, ought to be a subject

of the deepest thankfulness, my brethren and hearers; and it may serve, perhaps, to awaken a higher sense of what we owe to GOD for this distinction, to reflect what our condition would be were we deprived of it. What a dark and dismal gloom would settle over our prospects for hereafter, and how heavily the soul would drag through a weary existence to the painful uncertainty of an unknown eternity. It may serve, also, to startle those into reflection, who, having such great things provided for them by the love of CHRIST, yet neither ask the question nor seek for the answer. GOD grant that they may now give heed to it.

The direct answer is given in very few words in Scripture, and both by our LORD himself and by St. Paul, in the same terms. To the question from the Jews—"What shall we do, that we might work the work of GOD?" Our LORD replied, "This is the work of GOD, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." And to the question from the jailer of Philippi, "What must I do to be saved?" St. Paul replied, "Believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved." But however briefly expressed, the answer comprises the whole body of Christian doctrine and practice, and must be understood by us as if he had said, You must believe that JESUS CHRIST is the Son of GOD, the only Saviour of sinners; you must receive his doctrine, obey the laws of his kingdom, and follow the bright example of his holy life, if you would be saved. To believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, then, to the attainment of eternal salvation, will include faith, obedience, and perseverence.

First, of faith.—This, as the root of all religious attainment and the entrance to the privileges of the gospel, is indispensable; for, as "he that cometh to GOD must believe that he is," so he that cometh to GOD through his only begotten Son, must believe that JESUS CHRIST is, both in nature and office, what the Scriptures represent him to be. This is expressed in Scripture by receiving the testimony which GOD hath given of his Son—the Scriptures being the record of that testimony, inspired and verified by the HOLY GHOST. This faith includes his divine nature as the Son of GOD. That he who took our nature upon him, in order to accomplish the work of our redemption, was GOD as well as man—one with the

Father—of the same eternity, power, and glory—God over all, blessed for ever. This is fundamental, my brethren, and lies at the very threshold of the gospel; because on this depends the whole virtue and efficacy of his death as an atonement for sin, of his merits as the ground of man's acceptance with God, and of his mediatorial office between God and man. This was the faith of Peter, not revealed to him by flesh and blood—the faith on which, as on a rock, the church is built—this was the faith professed by the Ethiopian eunuch, when baptized by Philip—this is the faith once delivered to the saints—this is the faith into which we are baptized, my brethren, and which we must keep, if we would be saved. Nor is there an instance, in Scripture or in the primitive Church, of any person being admitted to the Christian name and privileges, but on the profession of this faith.

Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ includes, also, the belief of the doctrines he taught, by himself and by his apostles, as contained in the Scriptures. These are to us what the preaching of the inspired men was to the first Christians, and contain all things necessary to be believed and practised in order to our being saved. As a leading doctrine—a primary truth, without which the whole Scripture is an unintelligible fable—that of the fallen, lost, ruined, and utterly helpless condition of mankind, by reason of sin, must be received and firmly believed by all who would be saved. This is the doctrine which gives consistency to the plan of our redemption by the Son of God—which confirms the harmonious connexion of all the other doctrines of his religion, and which alone makes Jesus Christ precious to the believer. Nothing, my dear hearers, but the full, the realized conviction of this fundamental truth, can bring men to inquire, in earnest, what they must do to be saved. No other view of human nature can cast down the pride which exalts itself against God and the word of his grace, and bring men to desire and to pray for the Holy Spirit, as the author and source of all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works in the renewed creature. But it is the very doctrine which the natural man most abhors, and exerts all his ingenuity to escape from; and therefore it is, that it is laid at the commencement of religious attainment, and that no man under the light of the gos-

pel can be saved, until truly convinced, by the word and SPIRIT OF GOD, that in himself he is lost and undone—that in the LORD JESUS only has he righteousness and strength; and is thereby brought to repentance towards GOD and faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, for pardon and acceptance, for the renewal of the HOLY GHOST, and for eternal life.

This is the doctrine, my brethren, and the only doctrine, which realizes the truth of Scripture, which makes religion a reasonable service, and presents to every man under the gospel the means of determining in regard to his personal condition, whether he hath indeed come to the light or is yet walking in darkness. For certain it is, that no man ever sought and obtained the favor of GOD and eternal life, who had not first been savingly convinced that he was, by nature and practice, the enemy of GOD, the slave of sin, and the heir of eternal death.

Secondly, believing in the LORD JESUS CHRIST includes obedience to his commandments.

Faith and obedience are inseparable, my brethren, in any just estimate of spiritual condition. He who disregards a command which he professes to believe is enjoined by Almighty GOD, must be presumed to labor under some strange delusion as to the nature of faith, or knowingly to act in defiance of his Maker. Otherwise, his disobedience would convince him of unbelief, or true belief would cure his disobedience. While, therefore, any person continues in open disobedience to any of the commands of CHRIST, knowing that they are so commanded—which is the case with all under the gospel who are not wilfully ignorant—such a person can have no good ground to hope that he so believes in the LORD JESUS CHRIST that he shall be saved.

Among the commands of CHRIST, left with his disciples, one is, that they should openly profess his name and religion before the world, as his peculiar people. Now this all true believers do. But there are thousands upon thousands, in every Christian land, who have never done this beyond that of their baptism in infancy—all the benefit of which, repentance excepted, they have forfeited, again and again, by personal sin. Yet these persons profess to believe in CHRIST, and entertain some expectation of being saved through his

merits. But must not this be a wilful delusion, seeing their belief is not sufficient to lead them to obey this first and easiest command of their LORD and SAVIOUR?

Another command of CHRIST is, that men should repent of their past sins, and cease from sin in future, if they would be saved by him. And this every true believer in the LORD JESUS CHRIST certainly does. Yet there are multitudes of men and women living in the practice of known sin, in various ways and degrees, who yet profess to believe in CHRIST, and to hope for forgiveness and salvation through him, though this belief has never dimmed their eye with the tear of penitence, nor withheld their heart from the sinful pleasures of the world, or from indulgence in its vain pursuits. But is not this a still stronger delusion of the devil? an actual making of CHRIST the minister of sin, and a defeating of the very purpose of his coming, which was "to save his people from their sins?" How, then, shall those be saved from wrath, through him, who will not repent and cease from sin at his command?

A third command of the LORD JESUS CHRIST is, that his disciples should, on suitable occasions, commemorate his death by partaking together of the holy sacrament which he instituted as a perpetual memorial of his love in thus dying for them. This all true believers not only do, but consider it the highest privilege to be permitted thus to testify their sense of the unspeakable benefits by his precious blood-shedding procured for them; yet the countless majority of Christian lands professing to hope in CHRIST, are utterly regardless of this command of their dying benefactor, and flee away as rapidly from the symbols of his broken body and shed blood as if injury and not blessing lay hid in their mysterious properties. How, then, shall such persons be saved by faith in CHRIST, if they continue to disregard the plain commands of CHRIST? O my dear friends, awake, I beseech you, from this delusion of a barren and speculative faith, from the presumption of a disobedient hope, and from the misery of a delayed, perhaps an unavailing repentance, and learn, that if you would be saved you must so believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as to obey his commandments. No other proof can you give, or will he receive, that you do believe in him.

I have given instances in three of his commands only, and these the plainest and most openly distinctive of believers. But they are the three most openly disregarded, and upon pretences which aggravate rather than extenuate the offence. Remember, I beseech you, that himself warns us, that in the great day of eternity many will claim an interest in CHRIST which he will not acknowledge, and that it is not crying LORD, LORD, but the doing the will of GOD as revealed in his word, that will entitle to an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Thirdly, believing in the LORD JESUS CHRIST includes perseverence in faith and holiness.

Religion, being the improvement of our moral nature, must be progressive in its attainments. The heart may be changed in a moment, but the life must be amended by degrees. The principle on which the whole depends, may be the fruit of a short exercise of the faculties of the soul, but the trial and development of that principle is the business of the subsequent life; and to this, perseverence, that is, continuance in a course begun, is just as essential as faith and obedience. For as all the faculties are strengthened by use and exercise, in like manner our spiritual graces are enlarged and confirmed by patient continuance in well doing, until habitual reverence of GOD, constant regard to his favor, and steadfast preference of his will, become the established temper of the soul. The trial of the present life, my Christian brethren, is, to determine our fitness for eternal glory; and, as this can be wrought out only by a total change of the desires and affections of the soul, and can be manifested only by fruits of righteousness towards men and of piety towards GOD, in the conduct of the life—perseverence in obedience to the law of CHRIST is the crown of religion. To this duty, and it is spoken of in Scripture only as a duty, we are exhorted and encouraged by every consideration that can add force to the highest and most glorious interest that a fallen creature can contemplate. "Behold I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." "But take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunk-

enness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." "For we are made partakers of CHRIST if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." That we may fall away, therefore, is very possible, and nothing but watchfulness and diligence can keep "our loins girt and our lights burning." But the promises of GOD are more than equal to this danger. To those promises, then, let us look, my brethren, as the anchor of the soul. In the hour of temptation let us hear our heavenly *leader's* voice, encouraging us to "fight the good fight of faith," with the cheering declaration—"my grace is sufficient for thee." "He that endureth to the end the same shall be saved." "That which ye have already, hold fast till I come; and he that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron."

GOD grant, my brethren, that the blessed expectation may fire our hearts with renewed zeal to win the crown of eternal life—and that the power of his HOLY SPIRIT may stir up the hearts of all present so to consider what has been said, as forthwith to come to CHRIST, and learn of him what they must do to be saved.

SERMON VII.

CHRIST GIVEN TO SAVE.

JOHN iii. 16.

For GOD so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

In this epitome or abridged declaration of the gospel, my brethren, we have our thoughts and meditations directed to the only foundation of Christian faith and hope, in that love of GOD which prompted him to provide and bring to pass the redemption and salvation of a sin-ruined world. Whether in any, and in how many other ways, this might have been effected by infinite wisdom, omnipotent power, and boundless love, must ever be a vain and useless speculation. Sufficient, it would appear, yea, and more than sufficient, in respect to any claim we could possibly have, is it, that we have been in any way cared for; and the gratitude due for such undeserved favor should chase away every overweening conceit of the wisdom of the world, every high thought which exalts itself against GOD and the word of his grace.

Yet, if we are called on to convince gainsayers, or rather, to give a right direction to the views and inquiries of those who do err, because they know not the Scriptures and the power of GOD—(for ignorance is the parent of infidelity)—we are not unprovided with facts and arguments to demonstrate the perfect agreement of the means with the end, to show the connexion of the purpose and the plan of our salvation, by the incarnation of the Son of GOD, and the harmonious union of the high attributes of heaven's justice and dignity with the manifestation of mercy to man, by the sacrifice of the cross. These, though high, holy, and mysterious things, are yet the very life-blood of the religion we profess, and the constant theme of Christian gratitude, admiration and praise. Brought down, also, as they are, to the comprehension of our limited and clouded faculties, and

bearing upon our present and eternal welfare, there can be no excuse for the neglect of them, or of that improvement of love and mercy thus manifested, which only can deliver us who are favored with the gospel, from the double condemnation of sin and rebellion persisted in against light and knowledge, and salvation by the blood of CHRIST rejected and trampled under foot. Oh! what a fearful thought it is, to reflect on the thousands around whom the light of divine truth and saving mercy shines with the bright effulgence of gospel day, who are yet as unconcerned for the consequences as if this life were all they had to provide for; as careless of the judgment which must pass upon them for these mighty benefits, as if there were neither a heaven or a hell to receive them; and as negligent of the appointed means to reap the fruit of redeeming love, as if GOD had no claims upon them as his creatures, and faith and holiness no reward, and sin and unbelief no punishment, provided under his righteous government.

My hearers, you cannot escape from the claim which the gospel has upon you. Do what you will, or think as you will, the word spoken unto you must judge you at the last day. Let me, then, prevail with you for attention to the doctrine contained in my text, and for its application to your present condition, that light may enter your minds, and truth prevail against the cruel delusion of meeting death and eternity unprepared for either—*that* truth which sets forth the great and glorious GOD who has no need of the sinful man, yet interposing the might of his transcendent attributes to redeem his soul, and, at the unspeakable price of his only begotten Son, surrendered to humiliation, sufferings, and death, to buy him back from sin and death to holiness and life eternal—*that* truth which proclaims in my text, the antecedent, unbought love of GOD the Father Almighty, to a rebellious world, which is proclaimed in the gospel and commanded to be preached to all nations for the obedience of faith—*that* truth which calls particularly for our attention at this time, when the stated services of the Church fix our meditations on the advent of our LORD, to fulfil the high and holy purposes of that eternal counsel which he purposed in CHRIST JESUS before the foundation of the world, and which

is, indeed, the only predestination known to the Scriptures that we can apply to any profitable or comfortable purpose.

In discoursing on this passage of Scripture, therefore, I shall, in the

First place, point out the connexion of the text with the context.

Secondly, I shall endeavor to explain what is so clearly implied in the text, that but for the coming of Christ man must have perished.

Thirdly, I shall point out the nature of the salvation thus wrought out for us; and, then,

Conclude with an application of the whole.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

I. First, I am to point out the connexion of the text with the context.

That this particular passage is a part of our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus, is known to all who are acquainted with their Bibles, as it also is known that he therein briefly set forth the whole gospel, with the reason of that particular method in which only the salvation of sinners could be accomplished, consistently with the divine perfections.

God's purpose being, not merely to vindicate his justice by the infliction of the threatened penalty for disobedience, but the farther and more gracious purpose of reclaiming the offender, and restoring him to the favor he had forfeited—therefore, the execution of the sentence could not be on the sinner himself, because this would have involved his immediate death and consequent condemnation. Hence the necessity of a substitute of the same nature, and hence the necessity of the incarnation of the Son of God, when appointed and accepted by the Father, to fulfil this mighty and gracious purpose. The conversation with Nicodemus, therefore, is so directed as to embrace both these particulars—the satisfaction to be made for sin, and the means thereupon and thereby provided for the renewal of the sinner.

Keeping this in view, what is needful for our present purpose is plain. Our Saviour informs Nicodemus of God's proposed mercy, and of the means by which it was procured;

and declares the necessity which man, as a fallen sinner, was under, of a new and spiritual birth, to render him capable of the advantages proposed to him, and of the appointed and only sacrifice for sin, of which all others were typical. He informs him, that they had a figure and a representation in the Old Testament Church, which, in connexion with the prophecies respecting the Messiah, might have instructed them that the fulness of time, or the predicted time, was come, when all should be fulfilled. "For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." That as, in the one case, those who were bitten of actual venomous serpents, were cured by beholding the brazen serpent—so, in the other case, the soul bitten and poisoned by the venom of sin, might be healed by beholding the Lamb of God lifted up on the cross, to take away the sins of the whole world.

Of the necessity of that renewal which a spiritually dead creature must obtain, to render him capable of spiritual things, expressed under the figure of a new birth, or birth from above, he chides Nicodemus for being ignorant—"Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?"—Seeing that both the institution of sacrifice, which is an acknowledgment of guilt and forfeited life on the part of the offerer, and the very reason of the thing, require such a change to pass upon us. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."—By your natural birth you have no title to a heavenly inheritance, nor any qualification for it. The one can only be obtained by faith in me—the other, by repentance towards God, wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and bringing forth fruit unto holiness of life. And this birth from above, this renewal of the Spirit, is only to be obtained by believing in my Person—embracing my doctrine—entering my Church by baptism, and continuing therein as my disciple. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"—either that kingdom which I am come to set up and establish in the world, or that higher, but, at present, invisible kingdom, to which the profession of my religion is a preparatory and indispensable step. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have

everlasting life." Therefore, I am come into the world to gather into one the children of GOD scattered abroad,—to fulfil the law and the prophets—to declare the way of GOD more perfectly, and by tasting death for every man to open a new and living way, through faith and holiness, to eternal life. Thus is light come into the world—that light which is the life of men; and this light is witnessed both by the law and the prophets, and confirmed by my doctrine and miracles. "For GOD sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

Thus do we perceive, my hearers, the connexion of the particular passage before us, not only with this conversation, but with the whole gospel. It is, in fact, the germ of the gospel, and contains in itself, as in a seed, both the root and the branches of that glorious dispensation of grace under whose saving influence it is our unspeakable privilege to be placed. GOD hath given his only begotten Son, and that well beloved Son hath come, and shed the light of life over a benighted and sin-enslaved world. And yet what numbers refuse to come to this light; and for the old reason, because their deeds are evil. What multitudes cling to the world as their hope, though they know it is with themselves hasting to vanish away! And what still greater numbers care for none of these things, but flutter down the stream of time, amused with the bubbles which burst on its surface—occupied with the vanities which perish as they are gained—or engaged in plans and expectations which promote the advantage of one, with the injury, perhaps the misery, of numbers. Yet these all have souls, immortal souls, too, and for which CHRIST hath paid his blood. These must all be judged by the word spoken unto them, and suffer the eternal forfeit of GOD's love derided, his mercy despised, his revealed wrath dared, unless they come to repentance, and flee to that cross which is at one and the same time the release and the condemnation of sin and sinners. To this they are invited by the love of GOD, and commanded by his authority—to this

they are drawn by every motive which is known to have force with reasonable creatures, and, beyond all, by the tremendous truth contained in my text and enforced throughout the gospel, that without an interest in CHRIST they must perish for ever; which brings me to the

II. Second point proposed, which was, to explain what is so clearly implied in the text, that but for the coming of CHRIST man must have perished.

It is but to consider the nature of sin and its effect on the sinner, my brethren, to comprehend the value and efficacy of this unspeakable gift to a world of sinners. Sin is any want of conformity to the pure and holy nature of GOD. Of course there can be no fellowship or agreement between the sinner and GOD. Nor on the part of the sinner is it wished —the holiness of GOD being that attribute in Deity which the habitual sinner is most at war with. But more particularly, sin is the wilful transgression of any express command of GOD. Now this cannot take place, without setting at nought both the authority and the goodness of GOD. So that sin, in its nature, comprehends rebellion, contempt, and ingratitude. These enter into the very elements of sin; and where they exist, as they do in every sinner, though he may not be conscious of them without reflection, it is plainly impossible that any union should continue between the parties.

The effect or consequence of sin is two-fold—as respects GOD and as it respects ourselves.

As respects GOD. Seeing he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance, it must at once cut off the sinner from whatever state of favor he was previously in. And as it is moreover direct rebellion against his sovereign authority, as supreme lawgiver, it calls loudly for the vindication of that authority, by the infliction of the punishment due to and denounced against it.

Hence, as respects GOD, the inevitable consequence of sin is, renunciation, wrath, and punishment.

As respects ourselves, the effect or consequence of sin is, separation or excision from GOD; and this virtually, by raising the standard of rebellion in our hearts, against his authority and government—and actually, by siding with his

enemy. And were there nothing more, no farther consequences to be apprehended, this in itself would be destruction; for to be cut off from the only source of all comfort, hope, and blessing, without a possibility of return, is, in fact, to an immortal creature, to perish forever.

But this separation or excision from GOD because of sin, involves further the loss of his HOLY SPIRIT, which is the principle of life—spiritual life in the soul; the depravation of all the faculties of the mind, and the decay and death of the body. Hence, natural evil is the consequence of sin, and had no place in the creation of GOD until sin, entertained in the will and perfected in the act by the first man, opened a door for all its plagues to enter in and overwhelm us.

Now if the nature and effect of sin be as I have very briefly stated it, my hearers, and my warrant is the word of GOD, what must become either of an individual or of a world in such a situation? Is it competent to the rebel lying at mercy to settle the conditions on which he is to be forgiven? Is it competent to the offender to say what satisfaction shall be sufficient to compensate for his offence? Or is this the prerogative of the party rebelled against and offended? Let common sense and common usage teach us wisdom in this infinite interest. But suppose the punishment and penalty could be, by us, either borne or escaped from, or satisfied in any way, what becomes of the distance it hath put between GOD and our souls? How is that barrier to be removed? Can a human hand wrest the flaming sword that guards the tree of life from the hand of the cherubim, and regain the Paradise from which sin hath driven him out? But let us admit even this monstrous proposition. Would Paradise or Heaven be such to the sinner? And is the creature, the work of another hand, able to re-create himself? Can he who hath lost the image of GOD restore it to himself? Will the HOLY SPIRIT return at his bidding, and renew him in the spirit of his mind, and restore what sin hath decayed? Alas! here is an impregnable barrier which we cannot force, and without which GOD is but lost to us for ever. Every way, therefore, we are undone in ourselves. Hope is cut off, and heaven barred against us. And thus we see how man could not but have perished for ever, had JESUS CHRIST never been given.

He only could make the required satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. He only was worthy to be heard in our behalf. None other than a divine person could make that atonement which balanced and overweighed the infinite demerit of sin. And none other than the only wise GOD could so have met our want with the riches of his grace, as is displayed in the gospel; where "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other"—where sin is pardoned and justice satisfied—the sinner reclaimed and holiness established—death conquered and immortality brought to light—GOD glorified and the sinner saved—hell overcome and heaven replenished by the cross of CHRIST. Well did St. Paul say, "GOD forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of my LORD JESUS CHRIST." And O that the millions to whom this saving doctrine is plainly set forth by the preaching of the word, would but consider the bearing it has upon their eternal interests; that they would so meditate upon the gracious and merciful purpose which clothed him in our nature and stretched him upon the cross, as to prepare for his second advent in glory, to judge the world, to triumph over his enemies, and reward his servants. O come that blessed day when trial will be over, suffering at an end, and CHRIST be glorified in all his saints—when the Church triumphant shall celebrate the praises of her GOD and Saviour, in hosannas lasting as eternity!

But to attain this joyful and glorious hope, my brethren, the gracious purpose wherewith GOD was pleased to give his only begotten Son must be answered; which brings me to the

III. Third head I proposed to speak of, which was to point out the nature of the salvation thus wrought out for us. To understand this aright and to apply it profitably, we must consider the nature and extent of our undoing.

As this undoing extended both to body and soul, the salvation wrought out for us by CHRIST reaches to the same extent.

The salvation of the body is accomplished in its resurrection from the dead, whereof we have the assurance in the resurrection of CHRIST's body, which was of the same mortal and corruptible nature as that in which we are found. "As in Adam all die, so in CHRIST shall all be made alive." "And to this end CHRIST both died and rose again, and revived,

that he might be LORD both of the dead and living." As the entertainment of sin established the empire of death over man fallen, so the conquest of sin, and of him who had the power of death, by our representative, restores that immortality to the body for which it was originally created. This peculiar and distinguishing doctrine of Christianity was one of the fruits of CHRIST'S undertaking for us; and while it is full of hope and comfort to those who embrace and obey the gospel, increases the horror and despair of those who reject it. Because it is for the purpose of judgment that the dead shall be raised, that soul and body, once more united, and for evermore incapable of decay or dissolution, may suffer or enjoy, according to the deeds done in the body, to all eternity. Oh! what a price will those who now sacrifice to the flesh then pay, for the short lived, unsatisfying enjoyments of sense; and what a rich reward will those who now crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts of a fallen nature, then reap. O that we could realize this awful truth as we ought, and see the intemperance and thoughtlessness of both old and young falling before it. But alas! while this is unheeded, iniquity will abound.

The salvation of the soul is accomplished by restoring it to the image from which it is fallen. As sin committed proved the death of the soul, the destruction of its faculties of knowing, loving, and pleasing GOD, so by the destruction of sin is the soul restored to its original health, and rendered capable of all that the gospel requires. Now, it is only by the SPIRIT OF GOD (that same SPIRIT which formed the life of their souls in our first parents, but departed from them when they sinned) that this can be wrought in us their progeny. And this SPIRIT is the purchase of CHRIST'S death, who, "when he ascended up on high, led captivity captive and received gifts for men." This is the turning point of the religion of the gospel, which is, therefore, called, emphatically, the dispensation of the SPIRIT. It is by this SPIRIT that we are convinced of sin and moved to repentance. It is by this SPIRIT that we are renewed to holiness and confirmed in faith. It is by this SPIRIT that our union with CHRIST is witnessed, and the atonement of his death personally applied to the pardon of our sins and acceptance with GOD. And it is by this SPIRIT dwelling in

us that our mortal bodies will be raised at the last day. This precious gift is the promise of the Father and the purchase of the Son. As without His quickening, renewing power, all the other parts of our redemption and salvation would have been in vain, so unless we obtain and follow the SPIRIT we can never be prepared for heaven. And what is thus so necessary for all is freely offered to all under the gospel; it is offered to our prayers, to our earnest endeavors to conform to the will of GOD; yea, he is present in every one of you, my hearers, at this present moment, though ye know him not—ready to perform his gracious operations upon your hearts and bring you back to GOD, turning you from sin. He stands ready to enlighten your ignorance, to strengthen your weakness, to reprove your folly, and admonish your carelessness. And how often have you grieved him, and turned away from the gracious convictions he hath wrought in your hearts. O turn not away from his wholesome though sometimes painful discipline, but yield yourselves to the truth which saveth; that, renewed in the spirit of your minds, the salvation wrought out for you by the Son of GOD may be accomplished by victory over sin in this life, by the attainment of the mind that was in CHRIST, and by the final triumph of soul and body together, over death and hell, in the great day of eternity. Thus shall the gracious purpose wherefore GOD gave his Son, and that Son consented to be given for us, be answered. Thus shall he see of the travail of his soul, and his second coming welcome you to the joy and glory of his heavenly kingdom.

The religion of the gospel, my friends, is a provision of GOD's mercy to save your souls from eternal death, not absolutely, but on condition that you apply the means furnished you, to conquer sin and attain to that holiness without which no man shall see the LORD. The sentence of eternal death stands firm against every son of Adam who rejects the gospel and the love and compassion of GOD in giving his Son; and the sufferings of that Son for you will increase that condemnation beyond all power of expression. From this there is no escape. It is the appointment from heaven, and cannot be reversed. Take, then, the warning of this day, and let the application of what has been said lead you to a serious consideration of what GOD hath done for you—of the answer

you will be able to make when your account is called for, and from this judge of your state. In vain will CHRIST have been given by the love of GOD, if the purpose for which he came and suffered is not answered. In vain will faith in him be, if that faith is not fruitful in holiness. In vain shall we call him LORD, if we do not the things which he says. Alas! alas! that so many who know all these things should, nevertheless, remain unmoved by them, and never take a single step Godward; who hear to condemnation, and make a preached gospel the savor of death to their souls; whom neither love can draw nor fear drive from the follies of the world and the witcheries of sin. Merciful LORD! point the truth of thy word to their hearts; and let this, the holy day, witness thy power to save, by bringing some poor sinner "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to GOD."

SERMON VIII.

CHRIST THE SIN OFFERING.

2 CORINTHIANS v. 21.

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of GOD in him.

This fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, on which the gospel, with all its gracious invitations, encouraging promises, and enlivening hopes, is founded—from which all the appointments, ordinances, and means of religion derive their whole efficacy, and to which, as the procuring cause of pardon, grace, and everlasting life to sinful mortals, it continually refers the devout worshipper of GOD and his CHRIST, forms at all times a proper and profitable subject for the meditations of Christians.

It must, consequently, be to all a most solemn and impressive subject, my brethren and hearers, seeing it involves in its consideration the heinous and destructive nature of sin, the utter insufficiency of all and every human means to expiate the guilt of its commission, the wonderful provision of GOD's love, mercy, and wisdom, to constitute sinners righteous in his sight by the merits of CHRIST, and the personal interest each individual present has in this only propitiation, atonement, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, whether original or actual. I shall, therefore, consider the text as comprising the following points of doctrine:

FIRST, that all men stand in need of a Saviour.

SECONDLY, that the righteousness or morality of our lives can avail us nothing for acceptance with GOD, otherwise than under the shield of CHRIST's perfect righteousness.

THIRDLY, that we can secure an interest in the satisfaction made to the divine justice by the death of CHRIST, no otherwise than by so receiving the testimony GOD hath given of his Son as to believe and obey the gospel.

FOURTHLY, that to those only who thus receive and apply it, is this wonderful appointment of GOD, set forth in the text, made effectual to salvation.

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

I. First, then, we learn from the text that all men stand in need of a saviour.

Our condition with respect to God, how we stand in regard to his present and future favor, is infinitely the most important of all our concerns, my brethren. It may be well or it may be ill with us in the present life; we may enjoy or we may suffer; but in either case we can look to the end of it. In another life, however, this advantage is done away, and whatever our condition shall be, it is a never-ending and unchangeable one. And this it is which stamps with such superlative folly the guilt of those who neglect to consider, with the attention and seriousness it deserves, the ground of their expectations, whatever these may be, when death shall close the scene of temporal things and introduce them to those which are eternal.

One very strong proof of the divine original of the Scriptures of our faith, is their agreement with the universal impressions of mankind; whether aided by revelation or left in the darkness of their natural state; and the complete relief which these Scriptures give on the difficulties of our present, and on the anxieties respecting our future condition, is one of the most convincing arguments for our thankful reception of them. Were we innocent creatures, we could not possibly reconcile the sorrows and sufferings, the pains, diseases, and deaths, under which the world labors, with the loving kindness and tender mercies of our heavenly Father, and were we only obnoxious to temporal evils, though we should fear and dread them, yet our fear could not be of that indescribable quality which accompanies the expectation of those which are future, and to which death is but the prelude. This demonstrates, I think, that there is something radically wrong in the constitution of human nature. Death could not be so much the object of fear and abhorrence to all men, seeing it is so certain a remedy for the miseries of time, were it not that there is something thereafter still more to be dreaded, to which we are justly liable. And let no one here say, that it is to revelation we owe this fear and anxiety, because those who never heard of heaven or hell, or of the fall and redemp-

tion of man, are as fully, if not more, in "bondage to the fear which hath torment," than those who are favored with the explicit knowledge of the rewards and punishments of another life. Here, then, is one ground on which it may truly be affirmed that all stand in need of an interposition of heaven's mercy, to give relief to our laboring minds and save us from the hopeless conjectures of our sin-darkened minds, and from the cruel dominion of our relentless enemy; and this, we are accordingly informed, is one of the gracious purposes embraced in the precious gift of JESUS CHRIST, who took our nature upon him, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

But whence became we thus guilty, and obnoxious to all the consequences of guilt, in ignorance of GOD and alienation from him, opposed to his holy nature, and laboring under the curse which entailed sorrow and suffering, disease and death, both temporal and eternal, upon polluted mortality? This is a question, my hearers, which no human wisdom could ever answer. Heaven alone possessed the power, and, blessed be GOD, it possessed the will, to bring to light not only the disease but the remedy. And here is another, and that the chief ground, on which rests the fundamental truth, that all men stand in need of a saviour. We are too apt, my friends and brethren, to consider the interposition of CHRIST as respects our personal sins only; but GOD's gracious purpose, in making him to be sin for us, had a previous object in view, which was to reprieve the offenders from the sentence of condemnation, under which the first sinner and all who should proceed from him were held, and by reconciling the world to himself, through his Son, to put them once more upon trial, with means to regain all that was forfeited. On this rests the grace of the gospel; in which GOD makes known to the world, that for what CHRIST hath done and suffered as our representative, he is reconciled to his offending creatures, and calls upon them to be reconciled to him by believing in his only begotten Son, whom he hath given "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Hence we learn, my brethren, that there is a sense in which, had CHRIST never been given for us, we could not but have

perished, that is, we must have remained exposed to all the consequences of Adam's sin, both temporal and eternal, without the remotest possibility of escape; and this we have exemplified to us in the continuance of those temporal evils which are now the means of our probation, and are hereafter to be entirely done away in that higher state to which JESUS CHRIST hath undertaken to advance all those who believe and obey him. Thus we see that infants, who certainly have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, are nevertheless subject to pain and suffering, to disease and death, equally with those who are personally guilty; which proves the state of condemnation under which all mankind are by nature, and the consequent necessity that they should be delivered from it. From hence we also learn, that this deliverance, of which all stand in need, and which CHRIST has wrought for us, is not absolute and unconditional, but dependent on the condition of our believing in him whom GOD hath sent. We can be, and we are, accounted righteous in the sight of GOD, or, as the text expresses it, we are "made the righteousness of GOD," only by faith in CHRIST our righteousness. This we can entertain and manifest no otherwise than by embracing and obeying the gospel; and such is the importance of the gospel message, so every way suited to our wants and fitted to our state, that our Saviour declares of all to whom the gospel has come, "he that believeth not is condemned already; and the wrath of GOD abideth on him." This should be an alarming consideration to that great number who are favored by the mercy of GOD with the gospel, and yet make light of the salvation it offers, comforting themselves with the delusive hope, that an unprofessed and unpractised religion will profit them, though his own most firm word declares, "that whosoever is not for him is against him;" "and whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words," says he, "of him will I also be ashamed before my Father and the holy angels."

But there is yet another and more familiar ground on which to demonstrate that all men stand in need of a Saviour, and that is, our personal condition, my hearers, as sinners, both by nature and practice.

As there is no just view which we can take of Almighty

God, which presents us with any thing like imperfection in his nature and attributes, so there is none which we can take of ourselves, but what is loaded with imperfection, sin and guilt. Wicked men, indeed, would gladly flatter themselves that this is not so, and particularly do they wish to think, that God is so entirely merciful that his attribute of justice will be left out of sight in his dealings with sinners. So that notwithstanding the clear and express declarations of his holy word, confirmed by his laying upon his only and beloved Son "the iniquities of us all," and exacting from him the penalty due by us, they venture to entertain the delusion that the religion of the gospel requires only the outward morality of the life, without the renewed transformation of the heart. Thus, also, do men of proud and unhumbled minds contend for the meritorious righteousness of their own corrupt, broken, and imperfect performance of the duties which are owing by the creature to the Creator, and by one creature to another.

But neither of these deceits can stand the test even of reason, far less of revelation. For, independent of the direct testimony furnished by the wonderful plan of our redemption, as set forth in the words of my text—that nothing but an act of the highest love and mercy, of the most wonderful wisdom and contrivance—an act which even the angels desire to look into,—was competent to arrest the sentence of the broken law, and convert a state of alienation, sin, and death (which is that of man when considered as divested of Christ) into a state of reconciliation, trial, and hope—independent of this testimony, I say, the very best of us all, even with the aid of divine grace, cannot but be conscious of such impurity of motive, such weakness of endeavor, such failure in duty, such actual transgression in what we know to be forbidden, and therefore contrary to God, as by no possibility to stand the scrutiny of his holy and righteous judgment. And if it be thus under the grace of the gospel, in the regeneration, as our Saviour terms it, what must it have been had this great and effectual sin offering never been made? And what, let me ask, must it yet be to those who either proudly reject or carelessly neglect it now that it is made, and the highest assurance given that there is no other nor any more sacrifice

for sins, nor any other name or means by the which we can be accepted of GOD, obtain his mercy, and find grace to help in working out our eternal salvation? "If the righteous scarcely be saved"—if the most holy and righteous person that ever lived can be saved no otherwise than by being "made the righteousness of GOD in CHRIST," "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" With what face shall the gospel sinner, for whom all this is provided, to whom it is freely offered, and by whom it is impiously slighted and rejected, meet GOD in judgment? Let me beseech you, then, my friends, who continue to treat the gospel of our salvation as a mere visiting acquaintance, but contract no familiarity with its saving grace, nor endeavor at any nearer intimacy with its great author—let me beseech you to consider where it must end. If you are conscious of one sin, of one disobedience to the law of CHRIST, much more of habitual disregard of his gracious appointments and ordinances, how are you to escape the wages due to it? Can you conceive it possible, that GOD should give such a conclusive proof of his hatred and abhorrence of all sin, as to make his pardon of it to depend upon the voluntary sufferings and death of his only Son, as a sacrifice to the justice of his holy law, that those towards whom this rich redeeming love is displayed might continue to sin with impunity? No, GOD forbid! He was given, and he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity. And observe, I pray you, none will ever be accounted righteous for his sake, or, as the text expresses it, "be made the righteousness of GOD in him," but those who become, in fact, righteous by the means he hath provided and made known in the gospel.

But let me ask you, can means, however effectual, profit those who never make use of them? Alas! my friends, be not deceived; all the wonders of our redemption by JESUS CHRIST are set forth, and made known, and offered, and pressed upon sinful mortals, to the intent that they should use and apply them, and to such only as thus act are they "made the power of GOD unto salvation." While to those who neglect and despise the wise and wonderful means provided to enlighten the ignorance of fallen creatures, to reprieve condemned rebels, and constitute sinners righteous in the sight

of a pure and holy GOD, through JESUS CHRIST, the mercy of GOD and the love of CHRIST thus disregarded will prove the worm that never dies, the fire that never shall be quenched throughout an undone eternity. Be persuaded, then, I beseech you, while the sparing mercy of GOD surrounds you with the means of grace, to consider seriously, that as even innocent creatures have no claim of right to eternal life, "for it is the gift of GOD through JESUS CHRIST our LORD," far less can guilty, sinful creatures form any reasonable hope of it from any thing in themselves. For, "as all have sinned and come short of the glory of GOD," so "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, only the name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth—whom GOD hath made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of GOD in him."

II. Secondly, I am to show that the righteousness or morality of our lives can avail us nothing for acceptance with GOD, otherwise than under the shield of CHRIST's perfect righteousness.

The most obvious ground on which the truth of this proposition rests is, that as nothing but what is pure and perfect can be agreeable in the sight of GOD, or hope for acceptance with him, and as neither the thoughts, words, or actions of fallen creatures can possibly possess this character, therefore, there can be nothing in them meritorious of reward. When we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants, we have done no more than our bare duty. This is the hard saying which is so grievous to the pride and self-sufficiency of human nature. But it is a clear consequence from the fundamental doctrine of our religion, that we are saved by grace; which means this, that the whole of our salvation, from first to last, not only in the great procuring cause which effected reconciliation with GOD for us, but in the fruit thereof, in our hearts and lives, in all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, is the operation of GOD in and upon us by the HOLY GHOST; which is the purchase of CHRIST's death, essential to the renewal of our fallen natures, and on his ascension into heaven was shed abroad upon the world to prepare mankind for the gospel, and to enable them to profit by it. Whence it follows, that as we have nothing that we have not

received, to look upon our good actions as wrought by our own strength, or as at all meritorious of reward, or even as free from imperfection, is not only to rob GOD of the glory due to his grace, but to show evidently that we know nothing of ourselves as yet as we ought to know it—of the true condition of human nature as fallen and depraved, and of what GOD hath done to raise it, and revive his image upon it, and bring it back to himself. And this is confirmed to us both by observation and experience. For those who contend for the morality of their lives as meritorious of salvation, and rest their hope of hereafter on this sandy foundation, are generally such persons as, though not in direct opposition to the gospel, are yet not professors of religion, or, if they chance to be so, are such for reasons distinct from any saving conviction of their own danger because of personal sin, or from any realizing view of CHRIST as the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth. The knowledge of the fact as revealed, may bring men to assent in terms to CHRIST in all his offices as set forth in the gospel; but nothing short of a deep sense of their own personal guilt and danger by reason of sin, such as can be wrought in the heart of man by the HOLY SPIRIT alone, and that in the LORD only have we righteousness and strength, can bring them to renounce themselves, their poor, broken, impure, and imperfect works, earnestly desiring "to win CHRIST and to be found in him; not having their own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of CHRIST"—"whom GOD hath made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of GOD in him." This we know to be perfect, and, therefore, acceptable before GOD; our own we know to be imperfect, and, therefore, not to be trusted to in so serious a concern as the loss or salvation of our souls. That it must be perfect and complete, lacking nothing, the text teaches us, inasmuch as even the sacrifice through which mercy reaches the sinner was required to be spotless. "Him who knew no sin hath GOD made to be sin for us." He can accept nothing polluted or imperfect. Hence we see the danger of trusting to our own righteousness, the absolute necessity of an interest in CHRIST "the LORD our righteousness;" and the depth of that wisdom which hath provided for fallen creatures a righteousness, in which to see GOD

and live. Hence also it is called in Scripture "the righteousness of GOD," because it is perfect, and of his institution, ordination, and appointment, and that which alone he will accept from the sinner for justification of life; and it is called "the righteousness of GOD which is by faith of JESUS CHRIST," because it is received and applied only by faith in CHRIST as the procuring cause. Hence we learn,

III. Thirdly, that we can secure an interest in the satisfaction made to the divine justice by the death of CHRIST, no otherwise than by so receiving the testimony GOD hath given of his Son as to believe and obey the gospel.

That GOD, intending to redeem fallen creatures, should make known to them both the method and the conditions of his mercy, is not to be disputed without involving an absurdity. And, admitting we are redeemed, the only inquiry which befits and can be useful to those who are the objects of redemption, is, by what method and on what conditions is it effected? Now we all profess to believe, in one sense or another, that GOD has interposed by his Son to turn away the sad consequences of sin and rebellion from his guilty creatures; and had we no gospel, no revelation, or was it hard to come at, and difficult to understand, sure I am we should consider it a great hardship, but should be much more intent than we now are to find out all that related to it. But surely we might reflect, that the ease and readiness with which we can come at the knowledge of what most concerns us, will serve to deepen the guilt of remaining ignorant of or unaffected by so gracious a proof of GOD's good will and tender love towards us as is displayed in the gospel of CHRIST. Now let me ask this congregation of Christian people, suppose their eternal salvation was this moment to be decided according to the care and attention with which each one had endeavored to make himself acquainted with the Scriptures as the revealed will of GOD, how many of those now present would reap any advantage from such an offer? I make these remarks and put this question, my hearers, in the hope it may startle the neglecters of GOD's word, and convince them how vain it is to expect religious benefit if they take no pains to become religious; that it may rouse them to consider carefully what it is, and the interest they have in making it their

own. For so sure as God hath spoken to us by his Son, my brethren, and we are to be judged by the word thus spoken, so sure is it, that if we do not seek we shall not find; so sure is it, that if the value of our immortal souls does not interest us, so as to inquire, and that earnestly too, what must we do to be saved, we never can be saved. For it is not that the salvation or damnation of thousands of such worlds as this can in any way affect Almighty God—he is infinitely beyond such considerations, and hath no need of the sinful man; but it is of his essential and undeserved goodness, and for our advantage, that all the wonders of his redeeming love have been wrought and made known; so that the sin of ingratitude is added to that of disobedience, in all who fail to search the Scriptures and satisfy themselves respecting the great truths of our holy religion. The testimony which God hath given of his Son is so direct, and at the same time so consonant with his dignity and the nature of his office as the instructer, propitiation, and Saviour of sinners, as at once to draw the attention and deserve the most serious consideration of those who are favored with it; while the unspeakable interests dependent on its reception or rejection, are calculated to secure that accurate investigation which accountable beings might fairly be supposed to make. Yet notwithstanding all this, on no other subject is so much carelessness manifested, on no other do men so generally content themselves with acknowledgment in the gross and disregard in the particulars; satisfied with the mere cursory knowledge of the facts, without considering the bearing those facts have on their present and future welfare. But, my brethren and hearers, the mere knowledge of the gospel, though in itself an advantage, and one to be accounted for, is no otherwise effectual than as it is improved in our practice. The testimony God hath given of his Son, is to assure us that we may safely trust our souls to his saving power. To reject or neglect this testimony is to make God a liar, and to bar ourselves out from any entrance of religion into our souls. For to as many as receive him, and them only, does he give the power or privilege to become the Sons of God. While we content ourselves, then, with the mere knowledge of the gospel, without becoming the disciples of Christ by an open profession of him as our only Saviour, or making such profession without obeying the

laws and rules of his kingdom, we deceive ourselves if we expect any benefit from his death. For,

IV. Fourthly, to those only who thus receive and apply it, is this wonderful appointment of GOD, set forth in the text, made effectual to salvation.

That a gracious GOD, in bringing salvation to sinners, should have so appointed as to make the whole dependent on another, and not on the sinners themselves, is a stumbling block to the wisdom of the world. But we may be sure, from its being thus ordered, that it is not only most consonant with the perfections and dignity of GOD, as the supreme governor of the universe, but the best and the wisest, also, for those for whom it is provided. And the reason of thus providing for us through the righteousness of another, is plain and convincing, even to our poor apprehensions. For, says the apostle, "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, GOD sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the SPIRIT." "The law of the LORD is perfect;" but whence could fallen creatures, with faculties impaired and depraved, fulfil its holy conditions, even say that no previous condemnation was to be removed to make room for a new trial; and the goodness of GOD is as eminently displayed in providing a particular method for bestowing his favor upon us, as if he did it without any such particular provision. The question is not in how many or what other ways the omnipotence of GOD could have saved sinners, but according to what method and upon what conditions has he done it. This is all that concerns us in the first place; as humble, thankful acceptance, and diligent observance of the means appointed, is what concerns us in the next place. For we may be perfectly sure, that GOD having condescended to mark out a way for the attainment of heaven, that and that alone can bring us thither. Vain and ruinous, therefore, is the expectation that the gospel will profit us, unless we take care to profit by the grace it brings us; and miserable and dreadful the disappointment of those who consider so little the mercy and wisdom of GOD, "in making him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of GOD in him,"

as never to have taken one step towards securing the advantages so freely offered us in CHRIST JESUS. No, not even so much as professing the religion he taught, or observing the ordinances he has commanded. Oh! to how many thousands, if they continue thus, will that merciful Saviour, who was content to be made sin for them, have to say in the great day of eternity—"I never knew you!" LORD, were we not born under thy gospel, baptized in thy name, and knew we not thee always as the Saviour of sinners? may they say. But, alas! what will they answer to such replies as these, my careless, unconverted hearers—Have ye kept your baptismal vow? Were you saved from sin when in the world? Did you obey the precepts and example I left with you? Did you ever openly confess me before men? How often have I been set forth before your eyes, evidently crucified for you, and you have turned your backs upon my body broken and blood shed to buy your souls? LORD, we trusted in thy mercy. And hath not mercy and warning waited upon you twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years; but now the door of mercy is shut. I am no longer a Saviour, but a Judge. Ye would not be made holy in your day of grace, ye cannot be made happy in eternity. Depart, ye cursed, to the portion ye have chosen. O that GOD may be pleased to sanctify his truth to your hearts, and that that merciful Saviour, whom you now slight, may yet intercede for you and lengthen your day of grace, and give you to perceive and to seek after the things which make for your peace, before they are forever hid from your eyes.

And, dear brethren, let us ever bear in mind the high purpose for which GOD made him who knew no sin to be sin for us—the holy and merciful design with which he gave himself for us—the gracious end of all the ordinances and commandments of our LORD, that our lives may be answerable to the hope we profess: and that at the last day, when he shall come again with power and great glory to judge the world, we may be found the righteousness of GOD in him who loved us, and gave himself for us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto GOD, even his Father. To whom, in the unity of the eternal Godhead, be glory and praise, now and for ever!

SERMON IX.

THE MEDIATORIAL OFFICE OF CHRIST.

1 Timothy ii 5.

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

From the nature of God and the actual condition of the world, it would be utterly impossible, without further information, to deduce the reasonableness, the obligation, or the advantage of any religious duty whatever, on the part of man towards his Maker. That the perfections of Almighty God are all absolute, and without any limitation, deficiency, or qualification whatever, is one of those original, self-evident truths, which are independent of all proof, and admit of no more question than the existence and necessary attributes of the Supreme Moral Governor of the Universe. That the condition of man is the very reverse of this, is equally evident, from our experience of ourselves and from what observation teaches us of others. Hence, as there can be no point of union between perfection and imperfection in the parties themselves, the claims of natural religion, as it is called, are totally groundless, and all arguments founded on such an assumption are mere nullities, because the thing itself never did and never can exist.

If man is now what his Maker originally created him, and acting now in his every day conduct according to the law at first impressed upon his nature,—which must be the case if he has never swerved from God,—then he is a guiltless creature, and nothing more or better can be required of him, even by infinite justice. But if this is not the case, if by the common consent of natural reason, and by the higher authority of heavenly revelation, he is shown to be a fallen creature, departed from his original character, separated, in consequence, from God his Maker, with broken faculties and depraved affections, then is he at once a guilty and a powerless

being, without a shadow of help in himself to alter or amend this miserable state, to propitiate God, or to render him any acceptable, much less rewardable service. Hence, if religion has any claims upon us at all, it must be upon the principle set forth in my text; it must be upon this demonstrable position, that if there be a point of union between God as he is and man as he is, it must be found in some third person, whose qualifications are such as fully to meet the claims and demands of the one, and the wants and necessities of the other, of the two parties to this awful controversy.

Irrefragable as this position is from the plainest principles of reason, it is, happily, my brethren, put beyond all dispute by the whole structure of the religion we profess, whose fundamental doctrines are the fall and depravation of man by sin, and his recovery by and through a mediator between God and man.

That we should have right views on this subject is, therefore, of the highest importance; because all application on our part to God, either to obtain his favor or to deprecate his wrath, must spring from these two sources; first, a sense of want and exposure on our part; secondly, some well grounded hope that God is placable and may be sought unto.

Deprive mankind of either of these, I care not which, and you deprive them of all religious motive, obligation, help, and hope. And in proportion as these doctrines are realized in the just extent of their application, or neutralized and perverted by the natural enmity of the carnal mind to their humbling, yet saving efficacy, will the fruits of genuine religion or counterfeit Christianity be visible. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "No man cometh to the Father but by me," says our Lord, and I am yet to learn where or how fallen man can obtain any knowledge of God as a God of mercy, unconnected with Jesus Christ as the procuring cause of that pardon, grace, and eternal life, which is offered to a world of sinners, through faith in his only saving name.

Let us then, my brethren, endeavor to obtain clear and settled views on this most influential subject, that we may be guarded alike from entertaining a hope for which we can render no satisfactory reason, or from trusting to an expectation whose foundation is laid in the sand.

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

In furtherance of this object, I will consider,

First, the nature of our Lord's mediatorial office.

Secondly, the suitableness of the person appointed.

Thirdly, our duty and privilege under this provision of the love of God our Saviour.

I. First, the nature of our Lord's mediatorial office.

A mediator, as the word itself implies, means one who interposes between persons at variance, who uses influence of any kind to reconcile and restore to friendly intercourse those who are separated from each other. The office which the Lord Jesus Christ sustains, therefore, is of this kind, and, from the condition of human nature, must be in continual operation,—that is, must be exercised so long as any variance shall continue between God and men. Hence we read, "that he ever liveth to make intercession for us."

It is, however, by considering the cause and the consequences of the rupture and separation between God and his creature, that we shall best understand and appreciate this relation in which the man Jesus Christ is presented to us.

The cause, then, was sin, manifested by the transgression of an express command of God by our first parents, the representatives of the whole human race; and the consequences were, the loss of God's favor, exclusion from his presence, spiritual death, and exposure to all the penalties previously denounced against disobedience, by the law which was broken; and these effects followed, not singly to the first transgressors, but as they were spared by the mediation of the Son of God, and reprieved from the immediate execution of the sentence, to us also, their descendants. Here I would digress for a moment, my hearers, to obviate a very common ground of objection and unbelief, in considering it unjust to extend these consequences to the unoffending offspring of the first sinners. This, however, as well as all other unbelief, proceeds from not duly considering the subject. As our first parents, on their trial, stood for their posterity as well as for themselves, and we should have reaped the blessed effects of their faithfulness had they withstood the temptation, the justice of God stands clear of all imputation in our sharing

in and suffering under the consequences of their sin. As a fallen sinner, we read, that Adam begat a son in his own likeness; as an obedient believer the event would in like manner have corresponded with his condition.

Sin having thus entered into that new created world, which its Almighty Maker pronounced very good, and the consequences denounced against it being inevitable from the truth and justice of JEHOVAH, we have but to ask ourselves, what help or means there was with the sinner himself to avoid or escape from the curse, to enable us to form some just and proper notion of the mediatorial office of our ever blessed Redeemer.

For in the first place, the justice of GOD demanded, inexorably, that full satisfaction should be made to the broken law; but this involved the personal destruction of the offender by the suffering of death, and by consequence precluded all exercise of mercy. A substitute, therefore, must be found equal to the extent of this demand, to suffering and overcoming the death denounced against sin. And this substitute presented himself for us in the only begotten Son of GOD, who "took our nature upon him, that through death he might destroy death, and him that had the power of it."

Secondly, sin itself, as that which GOD abhors, and upon which the purity and holiness of his nature cannot look with the least degree of allowance, was to be put away and banished for ever from the presence of GOD. But what sinner can undo his own sin as an offence against GOD? The means for this also were to be found in another, and that other was found in the same Son of GOD, who afterwards became the man CHRIST JESUS, "who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven;" who "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," who undertook to bring in everlasting righteousness, and is now carrying on and will finally accomplish this mighty and glorious work, in that new heaven and new earth wherein righteousness shall dwell for ever, while death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire.

Thirdly, the renewal of spiritual life in the sinner spiritually dead, was essential to give this holy and merciful undertaking its effect, and to fit fallen man for the new state of trial thus procured for him.

But who can confer this indispensable gift, but GOD only? Is it, can it be, in man fallen to renew himself? Is it in man, the sinner, destitute and helpless, to turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon GOD? No, my brethren, by every testimony which can give certainty to truth, and by every proof which experience can supply, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and can rise no higher; "that only which is born of the SPIRIT is spirit," or spiritual.

Here then is a difficulty, were there no other, insuperable to human power, beyond the reach of human means, which can be removed only by and through the LORD JESUS CHRIST, who by the HOLY GHOST given for this purpose, carries on the great work of regenerating, converting and sanctifying the world. Hence we read that "when he had by himself purged our sins, bearing them in his own body on the tree, he rose from the dead, ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men."

Thus we learn, my brethren and hearers, to understand the nature and extent of the office which the man CHRIST JESUS fills, as mediator between GOD and men. That it is not confined to his present intercession for sinners, as we are apt too carelessly to imagine; but that it reaches back to the first procurement of mercy, pervades the whole order of GOD's providence, and extends forward to the final consummation of the mystery of GOD in CHRIST, when, all enemies being subdued under his feet, and the gracious purpose of his undertaking the office being answered in the everlasting salvation of all who believe and obey the gospel, the mediatorial kingdom of grace shall end and the kingdom of glory commence, where there shall be no more sin, "no more death, neither shall there be any more pain;" where GOD shall wipe away all tears from the eyes" of his servants, and "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne," which "redeemed them to GOD by his blood, shall feed them, and lead them beside living fountains of water, and GOD himself shall be with them and be their GOD.

II. Secondly, I am to consider the suitableness of the person appointed to fill this office.

That the office of a peace-maker, a reconciler of differences

between those who are at variance, may be performed by any who possess that kind and Christian disposition, we all understand, my friends. Yet there is to our apprehensions a certain fitness and propriety of character, according to the condition of the parties and the circumstances of the case, in the person who undertakes the office, which gives weight and impression to his representations; and we know by experience that considerations which produce no effect when urged by one person, will, nevertheless, succeed when presented by another. Hence we are prepared to expect, and I think I may say to require, that the person who stands in this relation between God and men, should possess that fitness and that propriety of character and condition, as respects the parties, which shall give reasonable ground to hope for success.

Now, in every requisite, according to our comprehension of them, the man Christ Jesus will be found not only suitable, but the only person capable of sustaining this office, of meeting fully all its requirements, and supplying all its necessities.

First, as the only begotten Son of God, and consequently of the same nature and essence with his Father, he alone was worthy and competent to step forward either to ask or to offer in our behalf.

To perceive this more clearly, let us reflect a moment, my brethren, on the nature of the controversy.

This was not a case in which there might be blame on both sides, and by mutual concession the breach be repaired; but one in which the offence was altogether on one side.

This was not a case of offence between equals, either in nature or condition; but between parties infinitely removed from each other in both these respects.

This was not a case of offence finite in its nature and transient in its consequences; but permanently opposed to and opposing all the perfections of Deity.

This was not a case in which compensation could be made by the offender; but one which involved his utter destruction as the only vindication commensurate with the offence.

And the object to be gained was not mere reconciliation, but beyond this, the procuring of means to undo the mischief, to defeat the consequences, and restore the offender, on

proper and possible conditions, to the happiness he had forfeited—to convert a state of sin and death into one of holiness and life eternal.

Now, my dear brethren, friends, and hearers, where, in the whole range of possible thought, can a person be found competent to interpose and to mediate with effect in such a strife and between such parties, other than the man CHRIST JESUS, as set forth to us in the word of GOD? Where else shall "a Daysman," as Job styles him, be found, qualified "to lay his hand upon both," that is, possessing properties where both might meet and be at one? Suppose, for a moment, that the offence was only this day committed, and we were met to consult how to undo it or escape from the consequences, to what quarter could we turn, to what resource could we resort? Suppose we were willing to make submission and to implore forgiveness, whom among our fellows in iniquity should we pitch upon to appear before GOD in our behalf? Oh! would not the reason that is left tell us it must be all in vain—that our envoy, partaking of the common guilt, would himself stand in need of a mediator—that partaking of but one nature, he could have no access to GOD, and must be consumed by his holy presence?

In the proper divinity of the man CHRIST JESUS, then, is fallen man's only hope. His mediatorial qualifications would be incomplete without it. There being nothing in his nature common to both parties, he could only be a mediator of one, and could not meet the requirements of the nature he did not possess.

How far it is competent for Almighty GOD to make the mediation of a created being available to the redemption and salvation of sinners, is a question which will never be entertained by any sane mind, because it is one which never can be resolved. Nothing, it appears to me, short of the full qualification for this office, which consists in possessing the nature belonging to each of the parties, can present any reasonable ground of confidence to sinners in the awful anticipations of death and judgment, and relieve mankind from the deplorable dilemma of being without any revelation of the will of GOD, or with one so uncertain as to be utterly unworthy of the name, and unable to make us wise unto salva-

tion. For to this result all speculations which trench upon the divinity of the man CHRIST JESUS inevitably lead; and it is my duty, my brethren, not only to warn you against them, but to give you plain grounds on which to resist the sophistry wherewith they are inculcated, among which I know of none, not drawn from the express words of Scripture, plainer or stronger than that which is found in a just view of his mediatorial office.

Secondly, as the Son of Man, (so called from having taken the human nature into union with the divine in his own person,) he was competent to represent all mankind, and, as such, to undertake to do and to suffer whatever was required by the perfections of Deity in order to reconcile the world to himself, and usher in a dispensation of mercy and grace to men.

This, my brethren, completes the mediatorial character of our LORD, and presents him to our view as every way suited to our case.

Whatever the honor and dignity of the divine government required to be inflicted upon the transgressor of GOD's holy law, was met by a representative both able and willing to bear the stroke of vindictive justice, and make that full satisfaction which alone could usher in the exercise of mercy.

Whatever the holiness of the divine law demanded of perfect obedience to its precepts, in all the length, and breadth, and height, and depth of its spiritual as well as literal extent, could be paid, and its just claims discharged, in the very nature which transgressed.

Whatever of example was needed to encourage redeemed man to rise from the death of sin and strive for the attainment of holiness, was given in the life of the man CHRIST JESUS.

And whatever can invigorate faith and hope with prospects beyond the grave, is certified and assured by the resurrection and ascension of JESUS CHRIST into heaven, there, in both natures, to appear in the presence of GOD for us.

Now, my dear hearers, let us ask ourselves, and with that seriousness which an immortal interest should produce, what is there lacking in the qualities of the mediator provided for us by GOD? Is there any thing that you would wish added, altered, or taken away? Is there a single provision in his mediatorial character for which there is not a corresponding

want in the condition of man? Is this poor delineation of it founded on and in agreement with the word of God? And have you better authority for his nature, his office, and the connexion of both with your actual condition? Oh! what unspeakable interests are connected with right views and a right practice of and under this provision of heaven's wisdom, mercy, and love. May a gracious God keep and defend you from the contagion of that pride which rises against the humbling truth, that man in himself is nothing—that his salvation is of grace, and all his sufficiency of God, by and through a divine mediator.

III. Thirdly, I am to consider and point out our duty and privileges, under this provision of the love of God our Saviour.

An obligation conferred implies a duty to be performed; if not in kind—which may be impossible—yet in the sentiment entertained of the favor bestowed. This is true of the common concerns of life, and must be proportionally more obligatory in the higher interests of eternity. The redeemed state of mankind, therefore, declared and authenticated by the gospel, as it is the highest favor that could be conferred, involves the strongest possible obligation to embrace and improve it. To those, therefore, who are called to the knowledge of this grace, the duty of applying themselves to whatever can further and forward the ultimate object of eternal salvation, must be the first and highest obligation they feel themselves under. And did men only give a reasonable portion of attention and serious consideration to their condition as accountable beings, as immortal beings, as redeemed beings, they could not fail to be more deeply impressed with what they owe to God and their own souls, and more earnestly engaged in seeking the pearl of great price. They would apprehend better what religion really is; they would understand more clearly the part they have to perform in working out their eternal salvation, and be induced more heartily to engage in it. For surely where every obstacle is removed, all needful help promised, and the highest reward offered, the deepest sense of gratitude and love should fill the hearts, and the most earnest engagement rule the lives of all under the gospel. My brethren and hearers, we are redeemed that we may be saved; the means of grace are pro-

vided that they may be used; a mediator is appointed to stand between the holiness of GOD and our unworthiness; salvation is limited on faith in his name; his qualifications are every way suitable; and the gospel is the proclamation of these facts for our information and assurance. Our duty, therefore, is to believe the gospel, to follow the direction and example there given us, by personal endeavor to bring ourselves within reach of its promised grace and saving mercy, and by exertion and perseverence to "press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS." Nothing else can prove that we have any just sense of what GOD hath done for us, any fear or reverence of his glorious name, any desire to be saved. For so long as we slight the invitations of the gospel, and on any pretence hold ourselves back from the duties it enjoins, we do, in fact, persist in rebellion against GOD, reject the mediation of JESUS CHRIST, and if we continue thus must perish for ever.

What is thus so clearly our duty is also our privilege, my brethren and hearers.

For as GOD was in CHRIST reconciling the world to himself, and as JESUS CHRIST, by the grace of GOD, tasted death for every man, it is the privilege, the heaven-granted, blood-purchased privilege, of every child of Adam, to come unto GOD by him; to return to his Father's house; to receive the welcome of a pardoned penitent, and to be clothed with the best robe, even the unspotted righteousness of CHRIST. It is the high privilege, I say, of all who hear the joyful sound of the gospel, on the simple faith of the message itself, to draw near to GOD through JESUS CHRIST. It is the warrant to believe, "that GOD hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our LORD JESUS CHRIST." What saith the Father in this message of love and mercy to man? "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." And what saith that beloved Son? "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest; learn of me." And what saith the SPIRIT of truth to the Churches of this beloved Son? "He is able to save, to the uttermost, all who come unto GOD by him." It is your high privilege, then, my dear hearers, forthwith to cast your idols (the vanities of the world and the lusts of the flesh) to the moles and to the bats; to lay down

the weapons of your rebellion, and return to him who hath made and redeemed you; to enter the school of CHRIST, and there be made wise unto salvation. "All things are ready, come ye to the marriage." And what hinders? Who can stand up and show cause why this gracious invitation should not be accepted? Alas! alas! that immortal souls, that reasonable creatures, should prefer darkness to light, and choose death in the face of eternal life. Yet so it is—the gospel is a savor of death as well as a savor of life; but not by GOD'S appointment. Eternal death is the wages of unbelief, the end of those who will not receive the love of truth, that they might be saved—who will not believe that message of mercy which GOD hath spoken unto us by his Son.

But it is more particularly, my brethren, the privilege of the believer, through this one mediator, to approach GOD in acts of private and public worship, especially in prayer. This is the foundation on which, in the chapter from which my text is taken, St. Paul rests the obligation and the efficacy of the worship of GOD. "This is a faithful saying," says he, in the chapter before this, "and worthy of all acceptation, that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save sinners." "I exhort, therefore, that first of all supplications, prayers, and intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;" "for this is good and acceptable in the sight of GOD, our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one GOD, and one mediator between GOD and men, the man CHRIST JESUS, who gave himself a ransom for all." "I will, therefore, that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

Hence, it would appear, my brethren, that in the judgment of St. Paul, the only reasonable ground of religious duty or religious hope in man, is found in the mediation of the man CHRIST JESUS; and that this mode of access to the Father being provided for us, it becomes not only the duty but the privilege of believers to draw near to GOD in supplications for themselves and others. More particularly does it appear, that this is the privilege of public worship, of joint or common prayer; and the reason, I think, is obvious. Whatever we do is coupled with imperfection, the holiest of our duties

need the intercession of a mediator, holy, harmless, and undefiled, to render them acceptable to a pure and holy GOD. Without a mediator, therefore, faith is vain, prayer useless, and hope a delusion; but with an intercessor possessing the qualifications of our great High Priest, a new and living way is opened for us to a throne of grace. Let us, therefore, my brethren, "draw near with true hearts, in full assurance of faith, that he who spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, will, with him, also freely give us all things." That we are thus furnished is an argument to warm the coldest heart, to encourage the most timid spirit. That we are thus provided, is a warning that we come not before GOD otherwise than he hath appointed. Wo unto that man who, in the fond conceit of his own worthiness, looks to GOD through himself, rejects the one only mediator between GOD and man, or adds others to His infinite sufficiency. GOD out of CHRIST is a consuming fire. CHRIST rejected is an accusing witness, a condemning judge. CHRIST dishonored is double perdition. "Let us, therefore, my brethren, have grace, whereby we may serve GOD acceptably, with reverence and godly fear."

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," that when faith shall end in sight, and the man CHRIST JESUS come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels, we may be accounted worthy to enter in through the gates into the city, and to join with all the company of heaven in ascribing glory, honor and salvation, to him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto GOD even his Father, world without end.

SERMON X.

CHRIST THE END OF THE LAW.

ROMANS X. 4.

For CHRIST is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

As the accountability of moral agents is to be inferred from their nature; as obedience required implies a law given by which it is to be tested; and as a judgment expected necessarily involves acquittal or condemnation; the process by which we arrive at our real condition as amenable to him who hath made us, is within the reach of every rational being, independently of what we are in the habit of considering as revelation. Upon this ground, the apostle's argument, in the first part of this epistle, respecting the Gentile world, seems to be constructed, where he infers their capacity to know GOD from the consideration of his works, and their obligation to worship and serve him according to the law written in their hearts; and so far there is not a dissenting voice in the world of his creatures, whether Pagan or Christian.

But the nature of that accountability, my hearers, the extent and quality of that obedience, and the consequences of that judgment, can never be satisfactorily ascertained by this general principle. For however undeniable in its truth, universal in its acknowledgment, and infinite in its application and use, yet, nevertheless, it sheds but a faint and obscure light upon the ten thousand anxieties which occupy the heart awake and alive to the unspeakable interests of eternity.

Hence not only the absolute necessity, but the infinite and priceless value, of the revelation we are favored with in the Scriptures of our faith, which is truly a light shining in a dark place, and the only light which can afford us a gleam of hope or a ray of comfort in the deep, and solemn, and overwhelming inquiry—"wherewithal shall I appear before the LORD? what shall I do to be saved?" To this there is but one an-

swer, my friends, and as we are able with a good conscience to apply it to ourselves, will it be well or ill with us for ever. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," is the short but comprehensive reply of God's most true and faithful word to the convinced and penitent sinner; as it, also, is the clear and express declaration of the same unchangeable word, that "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, only the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." And hence the deep importance to each one of us personally, to examine and ascertain whether we are believers, in the Scripture sense of the word; because on this one point depends whether we have the slightest interest in the mercy revealed in the gospel. And so indisputably certain is this truth, that if every other point in the obedience of faith were fulfilled by us under the gospel, this foundation and corner stone of all being wanting, the rest would profit us nothing. This I purpose, with God's good help, to demonstrate to you from the words of my text, applying them as St. Paul did, to shake, and I pray God it may be granted me, to pull down the unfounded confidence of too many in these days, who, like those of whom the apostle speaks in this chapter, but not with the same excuse, "going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God."

In discoursing on this subject, I shall, in the

First place, consider in what sense we are to take the word law, as here used by the apostle.

Secondly, what is the extent and nature of that claim which the law of God has upon us.

Thirdly, the means by which alone that claim can be satisfied.

Fourthly, what is meant by Christ's being the end of the law.

Lastly, I shall apply the subject.

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

I. First, I am to consider in what sense we are to take the word law, as here used by the apostle.

I believe I am not mistaken when I take for granted, that to the generality of Christians there is considerable difficulty

and no small confusion of mind on the subject, occasioned principally by want of attention to the various meanings in which the word law is used by this and the other apostles in the New Testament—and that this difficulty is increased by the plausible manner in which the word, and those passages of Scripture in which it is found, have been pressed into the service and support of different systems of divinity; an evil which is now perhaps without remedy, however evident it may be that the particular system is constructed on such a sense and meaning given to a particular word, such as law, faith, elect, &c., as is not consistent with the general tenor of the word of God taken as a whole; under which impression the Scriptures are read with a bias and prejudice upon the mind, in favor of that interpretation which best accords with the system of doctrine we may have adopted. And wonderful it is to reflect, with what readiness remote and even irrelevant passages of Scripture seem to come together in our minds, to support and confirm our previous impressions; and how those which militate against us, and conflict with our favorite notions, fall powerless on our pre-occupied understandings.

On which, I will only observe—that while each must make the application for himself, all should be on their guard against that dangerous influence which risks a soul for the sake of a system.

By the word law we understand, in general, a rule of conduct enforced by a penalty. And the divine law, which is our present subject, differs in nothing from human law except in the supreme nature of its authority and of the sanctions by which it is enforced. This will be evident, if we consider that the same principles are common to both. Neither affects those who are subject to it unless it be disobeyed. What effect has the law of the land against gaming, for instance, upon the man who never plays, or the law of God against theft, upon the man who does not steal? The penalty sleeps in both cases—and in this sense it is that St. Paul says, "the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient." In like manner when either of them is disobeyed, that moment guilt is incurred, which never can be removed and the law satisfied, unless by the infliction of

the penalty on the offender. From the very nature of law it can know nothing of mercy; that, if to be had at all, must be sought for elsewhere. Moreover, neither divine nor human laws propose any reward for the performance of duty. Protection and safety in the state we are in is all that law, considered in itself, proposes or confers on the obedient. This our own experience shows to be the case in the operation of human laws; and revelation teaches us that it was thus with Adam under the original law of God; for we read of nothing like reward, or an addition to the state he was in, promised to his obedience by the terms of the law. But while they thus agree in those principles which are common to law, as such, they differ in one respect. Human laws may and must be altered, amended, and repealed, according to the change of times and circumstances; but God's Holy Law, being a transcript of his own perfections, is everlasting and unchangeable. These observations are necessary to be borne in mind, my brethren, if we would come to a safe and practical understanding of the subject before us.

It is plain, from the context, that the apostle, speaking in this chapter of the Jews, uses the word law as referring to the law given by Moses—but it would be to defeat the whole purpose of this epistle, indeed of the New Testament revelation, were we to confine it to the Jews. CHRIST was indeed the end or object of that dispensation of the supreme original law of God; to him all its enactments pointed. And it is expressly said that "it was added because of transgression, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made." But my text says "that CHRIST is the end of the law to every one that believeth." Of course not to the Jew only, but also to the Gentile.

Therefore, the word law must here be understood as applying to that original universal law of God, under the obligations of which all rational natures, whether angels or men, are held. And here opens upon us, my brethren, a wide and extensive range of investigation, in which all our care and caution must be put forth, lest we wander from the testimony into some flowery but unfruitful field of speculation, while we lose sight of the simple truth as it is in JESUS. Let us, then, in the

II. Second place, inquire into the extent and nature of that claim which the law of GOD has upon us.

And here some one, I doubt not, is ready to say, if it is the law of GOD there can be no limit to the extent of its claims upon us, but the full obedience it requires. True, my hearers, and would to GOD we were all more under the influence of this solemn truth than we are. But as the Antinomian will tell you that he is freed from the law, that being dead in which he was held; as the Solifidian will wrest the Scriptures in support of a banner of faith; as the self-righteous moralist will sneer at faith, that he may establish his own righteousness; and as the great crowd of thoughtless sinners forget that there is a GOD to serve, a law to keep, and a judgment to meet, therefore it may not be unprofitable to consider in its particulars, what has so direct a bearing upon the edification to be drawn from my text. For CHRIST is only valued as we see and feel our need of him.

That GOD placed man, at his creation, under the law, as a covenant of life—that he broke it, and thereby incurred for himself and all his posterity, not only the loss of present blessings, but the penalty of death, with all the other miseries which the curse inflicted, we know and feel, my brethren, by the prevalence of sin and death in this poor world; and it is surely of the first importance to ascertain whether and to what extent we are bound by this law, and by what means we may be able to fulfil its conditions and escape its penalties.

The question then is—is this law in force under the gospel? To which I answer, that we read of no repeal—that, from the nature of GOD, no such repeal could take place; and to the objection that the law of faith revealed in the gospel made void or rendered useless the original law of GOD, St. Paul replies, that it did the very reverse, for that it established the law. And from the words of my text this conclusion is strengthened; for if CHRIST is the end of the law to believers, so long as there are believers there must be that law to them of which he is the end.

How then, it may be asked, are we to understand and reconcile the many passages of Scripture which sound as if the law was superseded by the gospel? To this I answer, that in such places either the law ceremonial is meant, which was

clearly annulled by the coming of CHRIST, all its shadows being found in him as the substance; or the law itself, not as a law, but as a condition of justification and title to eternal life by the righteousness thereof. As the supreme law of GOD, partaking of his holy nature and binding heaven and earth, it is unchangeable, and holy, and just, and good; "and not one jot or one tittle," says our LORD, "shall pass from the law till all be fulfilled." But as a ground or condition of justification, which can only be by its perfect fulfilment, it has become impossible to fallen creatures; for to such "by the law is the knowledge of sin," and not the means of salvation. Wherefore, St. Paul argues, that "verily, if there could have been a law given which could have given life, then should righteousness have been by the law."

But, if unrepealed, it must yet be in force as a rule of life to us in its full extent; and this, my brethren, is our actual condition, and the very doctrine, and the only doctrine, which gives to the dispensation of the gospel its gracious and merciful character; to the gift of JESUS CHRIST its infinite preciousness; and to the love of GOD in the redemption of fallen man, that unsearchable quality of wisdom and knowledge which, while the purity and dignity of his holy law was magnified, and his original purpose in creating man for his glory maintained against sin, death, and hell, could thus cause mercy and truth to meet together, and the glorious perfections of the Creator to harmonize with the imperfections of the creature.

To suppose, as some do, from insulated passages of Scripture, and from the impossibility that fallen sinful creatures should fulfil its exact and holy requirements, that therefore it is a dead letter, is to deceive our own souls fatally, and to upturn the very foundations of Christianity. For the grace of the gospel is constructed only on the claims of the law and our inability to discharge them. On the other hand, to assert the claims of the law to the perfect obedience it demands, and supply the notorious defects in our duty by an arbitrary imputation of what another hath done in this respect to certain persons considered as elect, is to wrest the Scriptures to our own destruction, and open a wide door for "confusion and every evil work" to enter in. No, my brethren, to us it

is yet said by this holy law, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." This royal law the gospel enforces by all the sanctions which time and eternity can comprehend, and all the authority which love manifested by example, and benefits conferred on the undeserving, can give to the precept of the Sovereign Lawgiver.

But while the law of GOD is thus unimpaired in the extent of its righteous claims upon us, in the nature and kind of the obedience required, it is modified and mitigated by the equity and mercy of the lawgiver proclaimed in the gospel.

To man in his integrity, that is, before his fall, the law presented itself in its rightful claim of perfect, unceasing, unsinning obedience; and it found him furnished by his wise and merciful Creator to discharge all its pure, holy, and life-giving demands—no law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin and death—no corruption of his mind leading him off from GOD, his chief good, after the vain delights of a perishing world.

But when sin obtained the mastery over him, banished the HOLY SPIRIT from his soul, and perverted and depraved the pure and perfect faculties bestowed on him by his Maker, then could this pure and holy law no longer be to him a covenant of life and peace, but an everlasting bond of fear, and wrath, and death.

What, then, was to be done? Was the law of heaven to yield and surrender to the law of sin, and the gracious purpose of GOD in the creation of man as an instrument of his glory to be defeated by the craft and malice of the devil? Yet this must have followed but for the resources of that infinite wisdom, mercy, and love, which had provided in the eternal counsel of the adorable Three in Deity against this foreseen event. Here, then, my friends, rises to our astonished and admiring view that wonderful appointment in which we once more stand for life or death, by the gift of JESUS CHRIST to take our nature upon him, and in the nature that sinned to bear the curse and satisfy the justice of the broken law—to fulfil its utmost demands upon human nature,

and, by so doing, to purchase for the sinner a reprieve from the sentence of eternal death, a renewal of spiritual life, and a day of grace, in which, upon the merciful and possible conditions of the gospel, to regain the heaven he had lost. "Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out."

Our Lord Jesus Christ, as the mediator of this new covenant, now proclaims to a lost world, that whosoever, believing in him as the only begotten Son of God and promised Saviour of sinners, shall heartily and truly repent him of his former sins, and for the time to come endeavor with all his might to obey sincerely, though not without failures and infirmities, all the commandments of God, shall, through the merits of his sufferings and death, have his sincerity accepted instead of perfect obedience. This is the condition of the gospel covenant, the grace and faith which came by Jesus Christ, the reasonable service of reasonable and redeemed creatures. This is that righteousness of faith so highly spoken of in the Scriptures, and it is so called, because faith in what God hath spoken unto us by his Son, is the root or spring of that turning to God or conversion from sin to which the gospel invites us, and which it requires, not only as the condition of our acceptance, but as the only evidence that we really do believe. This is that "righteousness of God without the law, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe," because it is of his appointment, and what alone he will accept at the sinner's hands for justification of life. And thus argues the apostle, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness, and not to him only, but to us also it shall be counted," or allowed, "if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification."

III. Thirdly, I am to consider by what means the claims of the law upon us are to be satisfied.

Now these, by the wise and merciful appointment of God, can no otherwise be answered than by faith in Christ. "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" was the question put by the Jews to our Lord, in the days of

his flesh. "This is the work of GOD, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent," was the answer of the living word which came down from heaven. And this short reply, my brethren, contains all that we need either know or practice to secure the salvation of our souls, as will appear by considering that we are debtors to the law in two accounts; first, for the penalty due to our disobedience, and secondly, for the renewed obedience we owe to it.

Coming into the world as sinners, and liable to the curse of the broken law, we continue such until by some act on our part we resort to the remedy provided for us. And here let those who think lightly of or reject infant baptism, consider the bearing it has upon this appointment of CHRIST as the end of the law for righteousness both to believing parents and their children, its efficacy on original or birth sin, and its purpose of bringing into a state of covenant relation with GOD those who have no claim upon him but what springs from their relation to CHRIST. Let them consider this, and be no longer led away after inventions of men to debar their infants from the mighty benefits conferred on them in this ordinance.

But being actual sinners also in our own persons, the law calls for our blood, "for without shedding of blood there is no remission," and from this claim the blood of CHRIST is our only refuge, "for GOD made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of GOD in him." But this blood can be obtained or made over to us no otherwise than by believing in him as "the Lamb of GOD which taketh away the sins of the world." By faith only can we be united to CHRIST. By our union with him only, and as found in him, can the satisfaction he hath made to the law be counted or made over to us, and we stand justified or acquitted from the claims it has upon us for the penalty due to our sins. And O that poor thoughtless sinners would consider, that there is but this one way under heaven to pay their debt, and that the faith which justifies, to give either comfort or assurance, must be as much the subject of consciousness as the sin which demands an atonement before it can be given.

Secondly, we are debtors to the law under gospel grace for

renewed obedience. And this claim can only be satisfied in the renewal of our minds by the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. In him as our living head, all fullness dwells, and from him descend those streams of spiritual strength and nourishment which give health and increase to his body, the Church, and to every member of it. "Without him we can do nothing." By his SPIRIT we are born again, by his grace we are strengthened, by his wisdom we are enlightened, by his providence we are defended and disposed of, and by his intercession our sincere though imperfect services find acceptance and reward. Thus "we can do all things through CHRIST which strengtheneth us," and thus, from first to last, "is salvation by grace through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast;" and thus are sinners provided by the love of GOD in CHRIST JESUS to regain the glory lost by sin, but which shall again be revealed in them that believe. O that the thousands to whom it is now given to put forth the hand of faith, and pluck and eat of the tree of life, would but consider where their refusal of the gospel must end; how they will be able to meet the claims of the law, and the righteous judgment of GOD upon their sins, and upon this their crying sin, the rejection of CHRIST and him crucified; how they will endure the everlasting inflictions of the wrath of GOD poured out upon their souls in all the torments of eternal damnation. O bethink you of the unutterable horror and despair that will seize upon your souls, when this JESUS whom you now despise shall be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance, the vengeance of the law and of the gospel, on them that know not GOD and obey not the gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and now, while it is called to-day, flee to the cross of CHRIST as the only refuge for all who have sinned and come short of the glory of GOD.

IV. Fourthly, I am to show you what is meant by CHRIST'S being the end of the law.

The common meaning of the word end being liable to mislead us in the right understanding of this passage of Scripture, we must consider that, besides denoting the close or conclusion of a thing, it also frequently expresses the object or purpose in view, and it is used here in both those meanings. For,

First, he was the end or conclusion of the legal dispensation, as it is called, or method of religion enjoined upon the Jews, which was imposed until the promised seed should come. But he was also the end or object to which all its sacrifices and expiations pointed, and on whom the devout worshipper was directed to fix his faith, as the true sin offering and propitiation shadowed out by the temple service; as he also was of all the sacrifices and acts of worship enjoined upon men from the beginning, as we see exemplified in the case of Abel, who was accepted as righteous because he offered by faith, or with faith in that great atonement for sin which was to be manifested in due time.

Secondly, as the original purpose or design of the law under which man was put, was the prevention of sin, and as CHRIST hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, therefore, having accomplished what the law could not do, he is said to be the end of the law, as having answered its object. For thus the apostle argues, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, GOD sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the SPIRIT."

Lastly, as the law required obedience or death, and its claims upon us grew out of transgression, therefore, he who fulfilled all its demands by the obedience of his life and the submission of his death, and did this that he might bring in everlasting righteousness, may rightly be said to have answered all its purposes, and, therefore, be styled the end of the law for righteousness; and thus, my brethren, we may discern why and how he is so to every one that believeth. The claims of the law upon us arising only from our sins, and the death of CHRIST having fully satisfied the demands of penal justice, a door is opened for mercy to enter in, while the law is magnified and honored, so that GOD can be just and the justifier of him that believeth in JESUS. And hence we learn why faith in CHRIST is the indispensable condition of the new covenant purchased by his blood. By no other means can we become parties to this covenant but by a personal submission to the law of CHRIST in the gospel, for unless we believe it, the gospel is a dead letter. By no other means

can we escape from the condemnation of the law.—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the law, to do them"—For "he that believeth not is condemned already." By no other means can we obtain that grace which renews the heart and guides the life to holiness.—"He that believeth in me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." By no other means are we reconciled to GOD and adopted as his children.—"Ye are all the children of GOD by faith in CHRIST JESUS." By no other means than faith in the Son of GOD can we obtain a happy life, a peaceful death, a joyful resurrection, and a glorious immortality. "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the LORD; he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Thus may every believer say with the apostle, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto GOD; I am crucified with CHRIST, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but CHRIST liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of GOD, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

GOD grant, dear brethren, that we may all make this application of what has been said, and of what this fruitful subject may present to our private meditations, and no longer live to another, but to him who hath bought us with his own blood, and made us kings and priests to GOD, even his Father; never forgetting that though we are indeed dead to the law by the body of CHRIST as a covenant of life, yet we are "not without law to GOD," but "under the law to CHRIST," even the law of faith, which worketh by love, overcomes the world, and sits down at the right hand of GOD, whither JESUS is gone before to prepare a place for us, that where he is there we may be also, beholding his glory.

And may the same gracious GOD grant that these our dear friends and connexions present, and all under the sound of the gospel who are yet strangers to this JESUS, may be moved to lay these solemn truths to heart. May they hear the holy law of GOD requiring their obedience or their blood; and if love cannot draw, may the terrors of the LORD drive them to the cross of CHRIST as their only refuge from its claims. Oh! my poor fellow sinners, ask yourselves seriously why it is

that the glad tidings of the gospel have no charms for you? why an offered heaven and a threatened hell have so little power to move you from the tents of sin? why a stricken conscience is put aside to another opportunity? and you will learn that it is through unbelief, and awake, perhaps, to the danger of your state. Oh! the wretched condition of that person who lives without GOD in the world, without a Saviour, without faith, without hope, without love, exposed to all the claims of the law without a shelter from its vengeance—who must come to death and judgment with nothing to present to GOD but a body and soul poisoned with sin, and fit only for the society of devils and damned spirits. Oh! the misery of the gospel sinner! How will the fallen angels mock at him, and glory over him, in the great and dreadful day of the LORD! How gladly would they embrace what he makes light of—salvation provided, righteousness wrought out, a Saviour offered, peace given, heaven opened, and glory promised. "Awake then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST shall give thee light. He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, and no man cometh unto the Father but by him; for there is none other name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved, only the name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth."

SERMON XI.

CHRIST ALL IN ALL.

JOHN xv. 5, latter clause.

For without me ye can do nothing.

Among the many inventions which men have sought out on the subject of religion, or, which is the same thing, on the means of obtaining and securing the favor of GOD, there is none more prevalent in the present day, or more ruinous to the souls of men, than that of a partial reception of the gospel. But few can be found who are hardy enough to reject and disclaim it altogether. Though there are some such, yet there are multitudes who receive it no farther than to claim for their sins the cover of its mercy, while they refuse their hearts and lives to its transforming grace and holy requirements.

But, as it must be evident to all, that this desperate delusion, which makes CHRIST the minister of sin, could have no place were the gospel, with its awful discoveries and merciful provisions, more carefully considered, I trust it will answer my purpose for your edification, so to apply the words of my text as to show the folly and insufficiency of a partial reception of CHRIST and his message—

FIRST, to man as a fallen sinner; and,

SECONDLY, to the same creature as a penitent believer. This I shall endeavor, with GOD's help, to lay plainly before you; and, then,

CONCLUDE with an application of the whole.

"For without me ye can do nothing."

I. First, I am to apply these words to man as a fallen sinner.

To do this to any advantage, we must consider both the condition itself and its consequences—a train of thought, my hearers, too seldom permitted to occupy the meditations either of the more serious or the more thoughtless portion of those who are, nevertheless, the subjects of this tremendous

ruin, and the objects of that rich redeeming love whereby its desolations are stayed and its miseries may be averted.

The state of man, as a fallen sinner, is that of alienation from GOD, condemnation to eternal death for the violation of his holy law, without the means of escape or the hope of deliverance by any thing in himself. And the consequences of this state are, spiritual death, or the loss of that faculty of the soul by which GOD is apprehended as the chief good, loved supremely, relied upon unreservedly, and obeyed implicitly; the prevalence of the animal nature, or flesh, as it is called in Scripture, whereby the original order of the affections and desires is perverted, so that instead of being in subjection to the law of the mind, the mind or reason of the man is become subservient to the law in the members; and the exposure, without remedy, to natural evil, in pain, sickness, decay, and death of the body—with fear, alarm, disappointment, sorrow, and suffering, both of mind and body, as the bitter fruit of that heavy curse which sin has entailed upon this earth, and upon all its inhabitants.

This is the true condition of fallen man when considered as unredeemed, and is indispensable to any rational comprehension of the actual condition of mankind, and of their obligations and duties under the advantages of revealed religion and instituted means of grace. It is also his condition as redeemed, with this difference, that what in the one case was absolute and irrecoverable by man himself, is now, by the undertaking of the LORD JESUS CHRIST as man's representative, become conditional and recoverable. The spiritual death consequent on the first transgression, and which precluded the possibility of trial, is removed by the restored competency of moral beings to apprehend the truth of their condition, and to apply the means provided for their restoration to the favor of GOD and to eternal life, through the grace given them in CHRIST JESUS. And thus St. Paul argues in his epistle to the Romans—"As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men, unto justification of life." And again, in his epistle to Titus—"The grace of GOD which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men." Now, this free gift, and measure of divine grace,

are equally the purchase of the death of CHRIST, by virtue of which the gospel is preached to us, and we are rendered capable of believing its truth, embracing its promises, obeying its precepts, and inheriting its reward.

Of this new state, JESUS CHRIST, as the purchaser and procurer, is constituted the LORD and king. "It is the kingdom of GOD's dear Son," as the apostle expresses it. Whatever relates to its government and administration is delegated to him. "GOD hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the Church, in which CHRIST ruleth as a son over his own house; angels, and authorities, and principalities, and powers, being made subject unto him." And all that concerns its close and consummation, is to be transacted by him in person.—"The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. For we must all stand before the judgment seat of CHRIST, that every one may receive according to the deeds done in this body, whether they be good or whether they be evil." With the deepest truth, therefore, is it said in my text, "Without me ye can do nothing."

Would fallen man, then, blind and ignorant as he is in himself, know the truth of his actual condition, he must come to JESUS CHRIST, the word and the wisdom of GOD, "a light of the Gentiles to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoner from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." No where else can certainty and satisfaction be obtained on those points which are beyond the range of his experience and observation.

Would fallen man profit by the knowledge thus revealed from Heaven, he must come to JESUS CHRIST, that the SPIRIT of life may quicken him to apprehend the saving truths of the gospel. "The letter killeth, but the SPIRIT giveth life. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life," says our blessed LORD.

Would fallen man be delivered from the condemnation under which he is held by reason of original sin, he must come to JESUS CHRIST, "who hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

Would he be released from the guilt of his own personal

sins, he must come to JESUS CHRIST, "whom GOD hath set forth to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

Would fallen man be quickened into spiritual life, he must come to JESUS CHRIST, who alone baptizeth with the HOLY GHOST. Would he be reconciled to GOD and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son, he must come to JESUS CHRIST, "who hath made peace by the blood of his cross—in whom GOD was reconciling the world to himself," by whom only "we have access to the Father."

And would fallen man be furnished for this new relation to GOD, and for the duties and the hopes which belong to it, he must come to JESUS CHRIST, the prophet, the priest, and the king of this gracious dispensation of mercy and love. For "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, of whose fulness we have all received," and who tells us in my text "without me ye can do nothing."

Thus indispensable, my dear hearers, is the LORD JESUS CHRIST, to all spiritual attainment in fallen man. As he interposed by the will of GOD between the sentence of the law and its infliction on the first transgressors, and by consenting to suffer the penalty in their stead obtained a reprieve for them, so did he also obtain for them the means of recovery and salvation; and in due time came forth from the Father, to proclaim the glad tidings to the world, to expiate the guilt of sin by the sacrifice of the cross, and by the high discoveries of the gospel to draw mankind to that eternal life which is only to be found in him. But to be found it must be sought, as the one thing needful, as the main concern of this short and uncertain state of being. For salvation is the fate of no man's nature, but the purchased reward of faith and renewed obedience to the law of life in the gospel. As the undertaking of the Son of GOD restored the moral competency of human nature, that competency must be put forth by each individual, according to the conditions of that dispensation of the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, under which it pleases GOD to call him into being. Under the light of the gospel, more especially, is this duty indispensably required of all who

would be saved; CHRIST and the power of his grace are freely offered to all to whom the gospel is preached—but to be obtained men must come to CHRIST according to the directions of the gospel. They must strive to enter in at the strait gate, by a hearty repentance and forsaking all sin, and to walk in the narrow way of holy obedience to the commands and example of CHRIST. For the gospel does not act like a charm, nor yet will CHRIST be found the minister of sin, by owning those who "call him LORD, yet do not the things which he says." And on so weighty a concern as salvation, carelessness and unconcern are nothing short of contempt of GOD, and if persisted in must be followed by the gnawings of the worm that never dies, by the torments of the fire that never shall be quenched. From this endless misery CHRIST alone can save you, my dear hearers; and he can and will save you no otherwise than as he hath openly proclaimed in his word. "Awake then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST shall give thee light." There is yet place for repentance; the sparing mercy of GOD yet waits for you, and that same JESUS who this day tells you, "without me ye can do nothing," also proclaims, "him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

But it is not only as the purchaser of a day of reprieve and grace to fallen man, that JESUS CHRIST is thus all important. He is the finisher as well as the author of our faith and hope. This he represents to us in the verse immediately before my text, by the figure of a vine and its branches. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me the same bringeth forth much fruit—for without me ye can do nothing."

Now though these words were spoken primarily to and of his apostles, and had an application to them, and yet have to those who come after them in the ministry of the gospel, distinct from what they have to men in general, yet in their plain and obvious meaning they refer to all who claim an interest in the gospel. As CHRIST is the head of the body, and Christians are every one members in particular, their union with him and abiding in him is just as essential for

the supply of spiritual life and motion, as that of the members with the natural body, or of the branches with the vine.

But the entertainment of sin severs this union with CHRIST, and destroys our abiding in him; which can no otherwise be restored than by a true and effectual repentance. And as the grace of repentance is obtained for fallen creatures by the undertaking of the Son of GOD, and is accepted only for his sake, and through faith in him, a consideration of the particulars which must unite to render repentance and faith available to the pardon of sin, will show, as was proposed in the

II. Second place, the absolute importance of the LORD JESUS CHRIST to the hope of the penitent sinner.

Sin is an offence against Almighty GOD, by the transgression of his positive command, and for which eternal death is announced as the just punishment.

Conviction of sin is the sense of guilt and condemnation thereby incurred, impressed upon the heart by the HOLY GHOST.

Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin, wrought in the soul by the same HOLY SPIRIT, and evidenced by forsaking sin and by earnest desire of pardon and reconciliation with GOD, expressed in fervent and continued prayer and supplication.

But the HOLY GHOST, with all his operations in and upon the hearts of men for salvation, is the purchase of the death of CHRIST. Hence there is neither conviction of sin, nor repentance for sin, nor faith to apprehend its danger, nor deliverance from its condemnation, without CHRIST, without an entire Saviour, the Alpha and the Omega of man's salvation.

What satisfaction can the convinced sinner make to the infinite justice of Almighty GOD, for those violations of his holy law of which he feels and owns himself guilty? Repentance is not atonement, nor can amended life, were either of them possible without the grace given us in CHRIST JESUS, undo past guilt and remove incurred condemnation. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." But the sinner's own blood is demanded by the law, not as an expiation but as a penalty. What resort is there, then, but to him "who is exalted a prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins?" Where can the sinner find an

atonement but in that blood which was poured out upon the cross, as a propitiation and full satisfaction to the divine justice for the sins of the whole world? This is the only expiation for the guilt of sin worthy for man to offer or for GOD to accept. It is the only substitute for the sinner's own blood, forfeited to the justice of GOD; and the revealed atonement to which the HOLY SPIRIT directs the penitent believer, enabling him to apply it to himself personally, as the meritorious ground of his forgiveness and acceptance with GOD. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with GOD through our LORD JESUS CHRIST."

But not only in what is outward and visible in the regulation of the life, but in the mightier work of renewing the heart and purifying it from the corruptions which sin hath engendered, of transforming the soul to the image of its holy Creator, and of sanctifying the whole creature to GOD, is it evident that "without CHRIST we can do nothing."

We have no access to the heart, my dear hearers, not even to discern its desperate wickedness and estrangement from GOD, far less to change its affections and renew its qualities, without light from heaven. This is the work of the great physician of souls, and only by following his prescriptions can its original health be restored. To call off the affections from the perishing vanities of time, to elevate them to holy and heavenly desires, and fix them on GOD as the chief good, is no human work; yet it is set before us as the condition on which eternal life depends. Without CHRIST, then, my friends, what can we do; without his HOLY SPIRIT to work this mighty change, to create in us a new heart, and renew a right spirit within us, what hope of success? "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" O that those who go about to establish their own righteousness, and contract religion to the meagre morality of external decency and decorum of conduct, would but consider this; that the Pharisees of the gospel, who have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof, would bring their accommodations of religion to the will of the flesh, to the experience of a new principle wrought in the soul by the SPIRIT OF CHRIST! Then they might see and understand the application of motives to the conduct of moral beings; how the very same actions in dif-

ferent persons are, nevertheless, in the sight of God, of opposite qualities. He looketh on the heart, my brethren, and can accept nothing from fallen creatures but what springs from the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, purifying it and working by love. Can a muddy fountain send forth pure water? No, my hearers? How, then, can the unrenewed heart bring forth fruit unto God. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" No, my friends, neither can the fallen sinner change his nature or undo his guilt. Come, then, to Jesus Christ, that what without him ye cannot do, may by his grace be accomplished. This is the turning point of this great salvation. As none but the sick need the physician, so until we feel that there is no health in us—until we learn the plague of our own hearts, and are savingly convinced of the ruined helplessness of our sinful nature—there is no form or comeliness in Jesus Christ that we should desire him. We neither understand or feel, that the whole sufficiency of fallen sinners is of God; that from first to last we are saved by grace, and that "without Christ we can do nothing."

As the grace and power of our Lord Jesus Christ are thus indispensable to quicken us to repentance and faith, and the virtue of his blood shed for us alone available to procure the pardon of sin, they are no less essential to render all that we subsequently do in the way of duty acceptable to God.

Our repentance and faith, our love and obedience, our prayers and praises, our worship and service, are in themselves imperfect and unworthy of that pure and holy Being in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and who charges even his angels with folly. The very holiest of our duties have in them a seasoning of sin, my brethren, and the most earnest of our endeavors are coupled with infirmity both of purpose and performance. Here, then, we may realize the absolute importance to us of that Jesus, who not only procured a day and means of grace for sinners, but who ever liveth to make intercession for them; to present their prayers and praises before the throne of God; to render their sincere though imperfect services acceptable in the eye of purity and holiness, and as their great High Priest to offer up continually in the presence of God, in behalf of his people, the meri-

torious righteousness and perfect obedience of his sinless life, the humiliation of his passion, and the atonement of his death, as the ground of their faith and hope of the favor of GOD and eternal life.

Nor is this all, my brethren. When the life of faith has carried the Christian victorious through the trials of this mortal pilgrimage, the grave, nevertheless, awaits him, and he must receive the wages due to sin, in the stroke of death. Here, then, if no where else, if never before, must man perceive and feel his own impotency, must acknowledge his utmost strength to be but corruption. His prospects all closed, his expectations cut off, his active powers mouldered into dust, what would the hope of even the righteous be worth, but for JESUS CHRIST? Can human power burst the prison of the grave and recall the dead to life? No. The voice of the Son of GOD alone is competent to this Almighty work; "and the hour is coming when all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." This is what gives such an awful impression to the hour of our dissolution, my hearers. This is what gives to the grace and hope of the gospel their infinite value, and to the name of JESUS CHRIST its high pre-eminence above every name in heaven and on earth. "He tasted death for every man, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death." He rose from the dead to give assurance unto all men, that they should not be holden of death. He ascended up into heaven the first-born of many brethren, whither he has gone before to prepare a place for his faithful followers. And he will come again, in the glory of his Father, with the retinue of heaven, to sit in judgment on his people and on the world.

Then will be seen the full extent of his power, and then will be felt the full value of that union with him which is now to be obtained on the conditions of the gospel, and, including as it does, by the appointment of GOD, the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of obedient believers, will constitute their title to a place at his right hand. Then will be realized the deep importance of confessing him before men, both with the lips and with the life. Then shall

be perceived the unspeakable advantage of Christian privileges, however lightly they are now esteemed by the thousands who disdainfully cast them behind their backs, and are wilfully strangers to their use. Then will these now despised things be found the power of God unto salvation, through faith working by love; and a preached gospel, with its high discoveries, its precious promises, its life-giving hope, and its saving sacraments, become by neglect the savour of death in them that perish, will deepen torment with the never ceasing but useless regret that they might have escaped, but they would not.

Oh, what a tormenting thought it will be—and never to pass into forgetfulness, my hearers—that during our day of grace we turned a deaf ear to the counsel of God, a hard heart to the love of Christ, and stifled the convictions of his Holy Spirit; that we never received because we would not ask; that we never found because we would not seek; that the door of mercy is shut against us for ever because while it stood open to receive us we refused to enter in; that our blood is now demanded by the righteous law of God because we trampled under foot the blood of Christ, and, though sinners in nature and practice, dared to meet God in judgment, without the shield of the Redeemer's merits sought and obtained by faith.

Thus have I shown you, my brethren and hearers, though in a very brief and contracted manner, compared with the extent of the subject, that in our main concern, the salvation of our souls, the Lord Jesus Christ is all in all; that, as the procuring cause and sustaining power of all spiritual life, he is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last; that, from the first seed of divine grace implanted in the heart, to the awful consummation of "Come ye blessed," or, "Depart ye cursed," without him we can do nothing.

The application, then, or improvement, of what has been said, refers to the personal condition of all present, as if about to appear before God, and will be profitable to you, my hearers, only as this is realized. The wonderful and effectual provision for your salvation, revealed in the gospel, hath surrounded you from infancy to the present moment; the truths connected with it have been repeatedly pressed upon

your consciences; and the experience of your own hearts must have confirmed the testimony of revelation, to the fallen, depraved condition of human nature, and the consequent alienation from GOD of every sinful creature. Now is this to continue? I speak to those who are careless of and unconnected with religion—alas! that they should be the great majority in every Christian land—is this state of desperate and wilful opposition to GOD to be persisted in? If not—and I trust that this is the better thought which sometimes presents its awakenings to your consciences,—wherefore is it not at once acted upon? If the power of sin over you now is so great, and the love of sin in you so strong, as to overrule the command of GOD and the reason of your own minds, will its influence be weakened by indulgence, or its mastery be more easily shaken off when confirmed by habit? Who among you has not the testimony in his own experience, confirming that of St. Paul, to the power and prevalence of the carnal mind? "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not; for the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not that I do." "For I delight in the law of GOD after the inward man; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" —and who is not hereby taught the practical lesson, that if he would be saved he must be delivered "from the body of his death?"

And shall it speak so plain and come so close to your consciences, only to be driven away with the thousands of good resolutions, and yet deferred amendments of life, which the law of sin has already triumphed over? GOD forbid, my dear hearers. Rather let counsel be taken from past weakness, and courage be derived from this precious gift of the love of GOD yet waiting upon you, to come to CHRIST. Let the sin that so easily besets you, that you have tried once and again to conquer, but have failed; let the frequent resolve to begin a Christian life, which has vanished before the temptations of the world like the morning cloud and the early dew, prove to you, that in your own strength you can do nothing; and bring you, with purpose of heart, to the sure and sufficient friend of the weary and heavy laden sinner, in the LORD

Jesus Christ, who came that a race of sinners might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly; who redeemed them to God by his own blood, that he might redeem them from all iniquity by the power of his grace; and who assures them, in my text, that without him they can do nothing.

To follow the world, to glitter amidst the giddy whirl of its intoxicating vanities, to catch its vain applause, and to reap its still more vain reward, may be accomplished perhaps without Christ; and the angels are weeping over the thousands of redeemed and warned immortals, who make no better use of the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. But to overcome the world, to withstand its allurements, to triumph alike over its smiles and its frowns, and so to use as not abusing the accommodations and enjoyments which are left amidst the sin-blasted ruins of its once happier condition —who of himself, my brethren, is sufficient for this work? Yet, if heaven is our hope on the ground of revealed promises, this must be accomplished in all who would see God. The hold which the world has upon our affections must be loosed, the power it possesses over our desires must be broken, and the grovelling inclinations of our fallen nature elevated to more substantial and enduring good than this transitory existence can supply. And whence is this to come but from above? And how is this to be obtained but through the Lord Jesus Christ, "who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God, having left us an example that we should follow his steps." "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Reason can strike the balance betwixt time and eternity, and master the calculation which dethrones the world and the things that are in it. But it cannot change the heart and turn the longings of the soul to God, the only good. Experience can certify, how weak and worthless the highest worldly delights are, to satisfy the soul and confer solid peace and lasting happiness; but it cannot fill the aching void which this discovery makes, or teach a new and living way to life

and bliss. These must come from GOD the HOLY GHOST, through the merits and intercession of the great High Priest. These must be sought and wrestled for in fervent, persevering prayer, in watchful self-denial, in confiding reliance that he who hath called us to the knowledge of this grace will not withhold his mercies from the sin-sick soul, but will bless the endeavors of all who come unto GOD by him.

"Without me ye can do nothing." Truth, LORD! And may thy blessing write it in every heart, thy grace make it triumphant over all opposition, and thy power bring a willing and obedient people to live by the faith of the Son of GOD.

SERMON XII.

ACCESS TO GOD ONLY THROUGH CHRIST.

MICAH vi. 6.

Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high GOD?

Reflections of a very impressive and practical character are presented to every serious mind by this passage of Scripture, and can hardly fail, I should think, at least for the moment, to prompt a similar inquiry even to the more thoughtless and indifferent, on the commanding interest of their relation to GOD and expectations from him. No sentiment is more universal, I believe, than that of the homage due to the Supreme Being; no duty more important than to ascertain in what manner that homage is to be rendered; and when, if we carry out our sense of accountability to the end, we shall all stand before our Judge, language is insufficient to describe the misery which must follow the neglect of so plain an obligation.

It is an overwhelming thought, my brethren, to imagine a dependent, ignorant, and sinful being, like man, about to approach the glorious majesty, resplendent light, and unspotted holiness of Almighty GOD; to picture to ourselves the conflicting emotions which throb around his heart, the awful anticipations which absorb his thoughts, and the agonizing suspense which weighs down his spirit, under the fearful forecast of an issue which involves eternity. But it is a wise and a profitable exercise of the mind, my hearers, for it is an interview which we have all to meet, and on our preparation for it more will depend than can be conceived or spoken of.

The words of my text do not, indeed, refer directly to the concluding scene of our trial and probation, but they include it, as the point to which all present intercourse with GOD should be directed, as the end in which all the means now made use of must terminate. I have, therefore, selected them, as calculated to engage your thoughts in a profitable

and appropriate course of meditation, to lead you to a serious scrutiny and careful examination of your own hearts, as to the grounds on which your religious duties, both private and public, are performed, as to the constancy and devotion with which they are followed, and as to the effect thereby produced on the heart and on the life. These form at all times a sure test of religious condition, and if duly attended to, will teach you the advantage of frequently inquiring, "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high GOD." I shall, therefore, consider them,

I. First, as a source of appropriate and profitable meditation.

Seasons of retirement and recollection are indispensable to the Christian—periods of serious thought and devout engagement of the heart, when the cares and duties of the world are intermitted, and its occupations give place to the higher occupation of acquainting ourselves with GOD, and of communing with our own spirit. Without this salutary practice, it may safely be affirmed, that religious impressions cannot continue, but will decline into mere formality, and deliver us back to the world in a worse condition than when we forsook its follies. If the unclean spirit hath really been cast out, yet if his former habitation continue empty, however well it may be garnished with outward profession, our Saviour himself gives the warning, that he will return with a reinforcement, and take up his abode more securely than before.

Hence it would appear, that religious impression, to be profitable, must be encouraged by our own exertion, must be strengthened by reading and meditation, deepened by prayer and self-examination, and confirmed by the practice of the duties of religion; and to all these, seasons of retirement and devout recollection are essential. For the mind can hardly engage in religious self-examination, or in the meditation of holy things, when exposed to interruption. Neither can it enter upon this duty without seriousness of spirit, without some solemn impression of GOD, of eternity, of our interest in him, and of our condition as respects his known will, and the appointments of his grace for our salvation. Now, to all this, the thought, "wherewith shall I come before the LORD," must, either directly or indirectly, be previous. For it is the

sense of seclusion with GOD, of *his* presence who reads the heart. It is the feeling sense of our own vileness and sinfulness, when compared with his perfect purity and holiness, and of his infinite goodness in providing for our recovery, that solemnizes the spirit and shuts out inferior things. So that whether we read his word, or meditate on the discoveries of his wisdom and mercy to his creatures, or recall his providences to ourselves—whether we scan the frame of our own spirit, or bring our sins and omissions of duty to account —whether we are humbled in penitence or exalted in praise GOD presides over the thoughts and occupies the workings of the heart.

According, then, to the frequency and solemnity with which such seasons are sought for and improved, may Christians look for the power and comfort of religion to increase with them—may they expect the strength of temptation to decline, the power of sin to be broken, and the practice of righteousness to be confirmed. And according to the sincerity and fervor with which they persevere in thus frequently shutting out the world that they may hold converse with GOD, will the world be overcome, and the comfort of hope and the assurance of faith be realized. For in religion, as in other things, it is practice that makes perfect; and progress in the school of CHRIST is regulated by the same law, which, in all other pursuits, limits attainment by endeavor, and bestows advancement according to proficiency. "Unto him that hath, shall be given, and he shall have more abundance," is the encouraging declaration which our gracious master holds out to his disciples to industry and perseverance in their high calling, while he warns the slothful and the negligent, that "from him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that which he hath."

II. Secondly, I will consider the text as prompting examination as to the grounds on which your religious duties, both private and public, are performed.

As religion is the reasonable service of rational beings, all who pretend to it should consider carefully whereon it is founded, and on what grounds their particular views of its doctrines and practice of its duties are supported, by the plain precepts of GOD's most holy word. "Wherewith shall

I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high GOD," is an inquiry which, from the nature of things, must precede all religious duty on the part of mankind, and must ever form an important subject of consideration to a serious mind. But as the answer can be derived from no other source than GOD himself, to his true and faithful word only can we look with certainty for information and direction. Now, my brethren, this is an advantage which we possess as Christians, not as men, and which, as Christians, we all have to account for. And I would to GOD, that both as men and Christians, we were more alive to our privileges and obligations, under the light of revealed truth.

That we have no means independent of revelation of knowing the will of GOD concerning us, and of determining satisfactorily in what manner he is to be worshipped and wherewithal rendered propitious and favorable to his creatures, is a truth proved to us by the enormous and disgusting superstitions of Heathen lands, both ancient and modern.

The impression is universal and indelible, that man owes reverence and worship to his Creator. So powerful is the sentiment, that it must, in some way, be satisfied. Yet so dense is the cloud which sin has spread over the world, that where GOD hath not interposed to give light, men have only bewildered themselves in seeking out many inventions, not one of which was worthy of the object nor consistent with enlightened reason, and (it is well worth your notice, because conclusive against the infidel claim for the sufficiency of human reason in matters of religion) that where this faculty was most cultivated, and had advanced the farthest in other sciences, among Heathen nations the science of religion was at the lowest ebb, and the ritual of its worship proportionally impure, bloody, and abhorrent.

In thus drawing your attention, my brethren, to the unspeakable advantage you possess in the light of life, and to the sure ground from thence on which you may advance with a firm faith to the performance of every religious duty, I wish it to be felt as a privilege for which no adequate return can ever be made—as a distinction from GOD which must be cherished and improved to the high and holy purposes for which it is conferred; and that it may be thus felt and cherished, mark the contrast which my text suggests.

A Heathen inquires, "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD?" But there is none to answer save a senseless and bloody superstition, scorned even by the clouded understanding of its own ministers. The glories of the firmament, the grandeur of the universe, prompt him to "bow himself before the high GOD" their Maker; but there is no voice to tell him with what offerings to come into his courts—no hand to point to the propitiation made upon the cross for human guilt—no message of love and mercy, displaying in its highest exercise the heavenly feeling of compassion towards a race of sinners. Under the silence of nature, as to what man can perform here or hope for hereafter, reason becomes bewildered in the maze of conjecture, and, wandering farther and farther into its own darkness, dishonors GOD and debases his fairest work with impurity, impiety, and crime.

How different, my brethren, is the condition of the same being under the light of the gospel! He, too, asks, "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD?" and, lo! the page of inspiration stands ready to satisfy his most anxious wish. Where the book of nature closes, the book of GOD takes up the wondrous tale, and by unveiling Deity to his adoring creature, calls forth the faculty of reason to its noblest use. Every step in the grand discovery gives increasing light, until "GOD manifest in the flesh" provides for every want, supplies every disability, and fulfils every wish which humanity can feel, or deplore, or long for. "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD?" "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD thy GOD require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD?" "Wherewith shall I bow myself before the high GOD?" He hath showed thee, O Christian, how to render acceptable service.—"I am the way, the truth, and the life," says the Son of GOD. "Believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved." "Repent and believe the gospel."

Such is the solid and unshaken foundation which the believer occupies as the ground of all his religious duties. To him there is no uncertainty, no conjecture, no doubt in drawing near to GOD. Light has come into the world, and he walks in the light. A new and living way is opened to the presence of GOD. Life and immortality are brought to light

by the gospel. A fountain is opened for sin and for uncleanness. Grace is given to renew his nature, and eternal life promised to faith and obedience. These are the glorious and gracious purchase of the love of CHRIST, and all these, my brethren, are prompted to your meditations by my text. GOD grant that they may stir you up and strengthen you, not only to meditate but to act, under a more lively sense of his rich redeeming love, a deeper penitence, and a more active faith. But let it not be overlooked, I beseech you, that as all you are favored with is the appointment and gift of GOD for your good, that good is not to be expected disjoined from the means. Revealed religion and instituted means of grace are not the creatures of human caprice or convenience; and whatever may be conceded to honest ignorance or sincere mistake in religious duty, it is a concession on the part of man only —a conjecture of human reason, and not a declaration of the word of GOD. And this I say, not only to enforce the duty suggested by the text, but to caution you, my brethren, against the prominent delusion of being wise in holy things above what is written, wresting the Scriptures to your own destruction. As the noblest work of creation, the image of his Maker, man hath dominion over all terrestrial things. He may construct systems of philosophy or policy, and alter and amend or abrogate them at his convenience. He may change the face of nature, and improve and beautify it to suit the taste of an ever varying fancy; but religion is fenced about with the sanctity of heaven from such profane intrusion. He touches the ark at his eternal peril—he departs from revealed direction at the risk of threatened delusion. Under every dispensation, religion has come perfect and complete from its author. It admits of but one improvement at the hand of man, and that is, faith and obedience, in a conversation such as becometh the gospel of CHRIST.

III. Thirdly, the text forms a proper ground of meditation as to the constancy and devotion with which your religious duties are followed.

As the influence of religion upon the human heart is progressive, and dependent on the care and diligence wherewith its divine impressions are cultivated, Christians should be very watchful over themselves in this respect. Knowing

as they do, the opposition of their fallen nature, the corruption of their hearts, and the tendency of wordly occupation to beget remissness, and lead them insensibly, almost, to a lukewarm formality, frequent self-examination is not only one of the most necessary, but one of the most profitable exercises in which the Christian can engage. The person who most frequently takes himself to task as respects GOD, will most frequently, also, be drawn to the duty of prayer. And the person who most carefully tries his religious condition by the devout affections which his heart entertains, will be most devotional, that is, most engaged and in earnest in his religious duties. The forms of religion are easily assumed, its exterior is easily imitated, regular times for prayer and reading the Scriptures may grow into a habit, the interruption of which will cause uneasiness; attendance upon public worship with satisfaction, and increase of knowledge in the doctrines and mysteries of religion, may proceed from the force of education, and the influence of particular society. These are all good in themselves, and GOD forbid that I should say a word to impair their value. But they may all exist, and it is to be feared that they may often be found, where the power of religion is unfelt and unknown. Against this dangerous, I had almost said hopeless condition, my text forms an excellent safe-guard, because it chains down the mind to the proper preparation for religious duty, whether in private or public, in the solemn thought, that the act itself is an interview with GOD, an approach of the worthless, sinful creature, to the great and glorious Creator; an application of the sinner to his Saviour, of the suppliant to his Judge. "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high GOD?" What train of thought, my brethren, better fitted to solemnize the mind, to engage the spirit, to fill the heart with devotional feelings when habitually entertained? What sentiment better fitted to prompt us to frequent application to GOD, than the combined feeling of want and supply contained in this meditation? And what feeling so calculated to elevate the soul, as the contemplation of the rich provision which GOD hath made, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST, for the wants of the Christian? But these, to be felt, must be seriously dwelt upon in our meditations—must be contrasted

with the darkness, doubt and uncertainty, which their privation would occasion, and must be drawn forth into active operation, by applying them to the practical duties of religion.

With this inquiry before the mind, the heart will be serious, and seriousness on the subject of religion is the parent of devotion. But without this quickening principle, the whole round of religion may be followed out, yet all be without profit, without any of that deep and heartfelt enjoyment which follows the restoration of a lost hope, and accompanies that sure trust and confidence in the promises of GOD through our LORD JESUS CHRIST, which is the anchor of the soul to the humble believer. A mind truly serious, truly in earnest on the subject of eternity, will not be put off with the forms and speculations of religion. It cannot subsist on such unsubstantial nourishment. It longs for more of GOD than it has yet attained, nor can it be satisfied with past experiences of the divine goodness. Hence, constancy in religious duties springs from the desire of religious attainment. The person who, like David, is athirst for GOD, will consider every opportunity of approaching him as a privilege. His Sabbaths will not be a weariness, nor his worship tedious and tiresome. Private devotion will not be interrupted, either for the fear or the praise of men, nor yet will it be intruded with Pharisaical ostentation. The Bible will not be laid in sight only, but will be studied, and its precepts inscribed on the heart and practised in the life. It will be the man of his counsel to the Christian, his study in the day, and his meditation in the night watches.

From the condition of man, and from the nature and design of revealed religion, constancy, continuance, perseverance in religious duty, is indispensable, my brethren. Without this there can be no progress, no growth in grace, no attainment in the fruits of the SPIRIT; and without improvement, without increase, there can be no reward. Religion is not an impulse upon the mind, once for all, as too many seem to think. But it is a measure of the SPIRIT OF GOD, which commences with serious thought, grows up under devout meditation, and is matured by constancy in religious duty. And did we but consider that it is an exotic, a plant of heavenly growth, transplanted into an ungenial soil, which

can live, and grow, and become fruitful, only through constant care and diligent cultivation, dependent for effect on the fostering influence of God's blessing, more earnestness would be manifested, more joy and peace in believing be experienced, and multitudes who now stand aloof from the gospel would be encouraged to strive to enter in at the strait gate. But the coldness of Christians causes the decline of religion in the world. As they appear to enjoy but little, others are not stimulated to seek the pearl of great price, and not a few are led to doubt whether the religion of Jesus Christ be preferable to the morality of the world. This is a reproach and an injury, my brethren, which Christians are bound to remove from their holy profession, and nothing will contribute so speedily and effectually to this happy end as manifesting that they are themselves in earnest, by the constancy and fervor with which they press towards the mark, for the prize of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

My text leads to the inquiry—

IV. Fourthly, as to the effect produced on the heart and on the life by religious duties performed.

As the tree is known by its fruit, so is the Christian known by the fruits of the Spirit in the conversation of his life; and where there is care to learn, and diligence to put in practice, the precepts of the gospel, those fruits will be brought forth, in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some an hundred fold, according to the various conditions and capacities which the providence of Almighty God apportions to his creatures.

Whether, therefore, our religion be in word merely, or in power, must be determined by bringing both the inward and the outward man to the standard given us in the word of God; and as the person who resorts most frequently to this investigation will be better acquainted with himself, and with the duties which God requires of him as a redeemed sinner, than the person who either altogether neglects or carelessly performs it, so will the effect surely be in proportion. God hath set forth this principle in his holy word, as the rule by which he dispenses the blessing of his grace in the present life, and his rewards in the life that is to come. "Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." "To him that hath shall be

given." "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." On the constancy and seriousness, then, with which our religious course is pursued, will depend our advancement in the divine life, our comfort in our own feelings, and our place in eternity:—consequences, my brethren, which cannot be lightly estimated, and which ought to ensure that deep and earnest entry into the temper of our own hearts, that honest scrutiny into the practice of our lives, which shall recover us to a more unreserved surrender of ourselves to God, a more marked separation from the vanities and follies of the world, a more constant pursuit of our private and public opportunities of drawing near to him in meditation and prayer, and, as the blessed effect, a more lively enjoyment of the cheering hope which his promises convey to the heart that trusts in them.

Professors of religion are much in the habit of looking to their comfort; and certainly, the religion which affords no actual consolation to its professors, cannot be worthy of much sacrifice. Professing Christians, also, are much in the habit of complaining of desertion and discomfort under the hidings of God's face from them; and certainly, the religion which presents its enjoyments equally to the diligent and the slothful, to the steadfast and to the unstable professor of its hope, would be still less worthy of its author and of our exertions. But let us not deceive ourselves, my brethren, either by expecting too much, or by refusing what we may conceive to be too little; neither let us attempt to force comfort from the Spirit of God, and thereby be deceived into assuming what we are not entitled to, or what he sees fit to withhold. The only true and safe ground on which to expect the comforts of revealed religion, is the performance of commanded duty. Let us do this with fervor and constancy, and, as God is true, the effect will follow; let us be more intent upon our work than upon our daily wages, and if our comforts are withheld let us not charge God foolishly, let us rather fear that the work has not been well done, that it may stir us up to greater diligence; above all, let us never despair, "but let patience have her perfect work, for in due time we shall reap if we faint not."

Thus profitably may the meditations to be drawn from my text be applied by Christians. It is indeed but an outline which I have given, but one which, I trust, my brethren, you will endeavor to fill up with the sincerity of purpose which its importance calls for.

I will, therefore,

Conclude with a few words, by way of practical improvement, both to Christians and others.

"Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high GOD?"

Apt and proper as this sentiment is to precede every act of religious worship, by what proportion of those now present was it entertained previous to coming up to the house of GOD? My hearers, you can answer, and as that answer shall be, let the reproof or the acquittal follow; but, in either case, let it press upon your hearts the propriety, the advantage, yea, the necessity, that the rich provision GOD hath made for your salvation should be the subject of serious thought and active improvement. My dear friends, this lies at the very threshold of any benefit from the gospel. God is revealed that he may be sought unto by men; and how he is to be approached without knowing "wherewith to come before him," or how this is to be known but from himself through his word, passes my understanding. You may, indeed, say that you know the terms and conditions of the gospel. True; and so much the sorer your condemnation, if you shall continue to slight its gracious invitation. But you must also know, that revealed religion is not a system of abstract, speculative truth, but of practical duty. Its rewards are not proposed to knowledge as such, but to knowledge as applied and improved to its proper end. Ponder, therefore, in your hearts, the parable of the talents, and consider carefully the case of the unprofitable servant, lest it shall be said to you also, and when you shall have nought to answer, "out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant."

"Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high GOD?"

The practical improvement of these words, and of what I have found to say upon them, is founded on their connexion with what, I trust, will be the occupation of the ensuing week,

my brethren. The solemn events in our Redeemer's history which it is specially appropriated to celebrate, ought to be marked with the deepest interest by his disciples. JESUS CHRIST, and him crucified for us, is an affecting theme to the heart of the believer, and it embraces a wide field for the range of devout and profitable meditation. But in nothing is it more comprehensive than in its connexion with our drawing near to GOD. Without his interposition we can neither begin, nor continue, nor end. "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD?" The answer is, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." "Without me ye can do nothing." "Wherewith shall I bow myself before the high GOD?" The answer is, "Through him we have access by one SPIRIT to the Father," and "the blood of JESUS CHRIST, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "What shall we do that we might work the works of GOD?" The answer is, "This is the work of GOD, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent." "What shall we do that we may inherit eternal life?" The answer is, "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Take with you, then, my brethren, into the retirement of your religious meditations and exercises, this deep and impressive inquiry. Dwell upon it in the full extent of its connexion with your religious comfort and religious hope; and may GOD own his word and increase its power in your hearts, that your light may shine before men, to the glory of his name and the advancement of his kingdom. AMEN.

SERMON XIII.

CHRIST'S CALL TO REPENTANCE.

LUKE v. 32.

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.

That our duties should, at the same time, be favors and privileges, is the peculiar characteristic of the gospel, my brethren; and that even those duties which carry the appearance of harshness and severity in their appointment and exercise, should be of this description, is a most convincing proof, when duly considered, of that wisdom, mercy, and love, which contrived and fulfilled the wondrous plan whereby the perfections of GOD and the imperfections of fallen man are made to harmonize, and the operations of divine grace reconciled with the free agency of accountable beings.

In no part of our religious duty is this more evident, than in that which forms the subject matter of my text. Until considered, applied, and exercised, it presents a most forbidding aspect; we associate whatever is gloomy and severe to our imaginations with the very idea of repentance, and dread the thought of even attempting to enter upon it as a duty. But this mistaken view of the subject does not arise from the duty itself, but from the preference of that of which we are called upon to repent; it is the love of sin, in some of its almost innumerable deceits, which is at the bottom of this reluctance, and hence it is, that whatever the enemy of our souls or our own false hearts can suggest against it, is greedily listened to.

Yet, beyond any dispute, it is a privilege conferred upon the sinner, and of the highest kind; to be permitted to repent is a favor which he could not even ask; far less to have his repentance accepted and his sin forgiven, to have his heart disposed by the SPIRIT OF GOD to listen to the grounds, the motives, the necessity of repentance, and his natural reluc-

tance and even inability to enter upon it, removed and supplied by divine grace: as it also is a privilege and advantage of no common character, that what is so essential to all religious attainments should be pressed upon the attention by the preaching of the gospel, should be set forth as the first step in the divine life, the unalterable, and, at the same time, wise and merciful appointment of GOD to regain his favor. I trust, therefore, it will be helpful to all present to consider, more at length, the particular purpose mentioned by our LORD in my text—"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

In discoursing on these words on the present occasion, and to illustrate the text, I shall inquire,

FIRST, whom our LORD means by the word righteous.

SECONDLY, whom by the word sinners.

THIRDLY, what he means by repentance.

FOURTHLY, what by calling sinners to repentance. And shall, then,

CONCLUDE with an application of the whole.

I. First, I am to inquire what description of persons our LORD here calls the righteous.

As it is the clear and express condition of the gospel, and the very foundation on which its grace and mercy rest, that, in the view of unspotted purity and holiness, none such are to be found in this fallen world, our LORD cannot be supposed to speak of persons righteous in this sense; for it is written, "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." "There is none righteous, no not one." But, though not in the strict and legal sense, yet in an evangelical sense, to which, in multiplied passages of Scripture, the phrase is adapted, there can be no question but that there were many righteous persons upon earth at that time. In every age of the world, and under every dispensation of religion, GOD hath always had a people who feared and honored his holy name, and served him in faithfulness and truth according to the light afforded them. Of this we have many examples, both in the Old and New Testaments, such as Enoch and Noah before the flood, Job, Melchizedek, Abraham, and Lot after it, Moses, Samuel, and the prophets under the law, together with those in our Saviour's day who are

expressly mentioned as just and righteous persons, such as Zacharias and Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna, Joseph and Mary the mother of our LORD, with Nathaniel, and many others whose names are not mentioned; all of whom, as they feared GOD and wrought righteousness, he was pleased, according to the terms of the new covenant, to accept of as righteous through CHRIST, though not strictly so in themselves. Such persons as these, therefore, having by repentance and faith fled to the refuge of their souls in GOD's revealed method of mercy for them, needed not to be called to it again.

Some have supposed that our LORD on this occasion spake ironically, in derision of the Pharisees, who counted that they were righteous, and despised others, and consequently would not listen to a call to repentance. But it appears to me that the grave and dignified nature of our LORD's office, with the importance of every word he spake, forbids a resort to this construction. Neither is it necessary; for we have only to advert to similar expressions to understand fully his meaning. Thus, in the case of the Syro-Phenician woman, our Saviour says, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" where it is evidently the meaning that he was sent to them in the first place; that his personal ministry was to be confined to the nation of the Jews; that the gospel was first to be preached to them, while nevertheless his name was to be for salvation to the ends of the earth. So in the case before us, when reproached by the conceited and self-righteous Pharisees for associating with publicans and sinners, he justified himself and reproved them in the words of my text. As if he had said, The purpose for which I am come into the world is to reform and reclaim such as these, therefore I associate with them. As it is the sick only who have need of a physician, so it is to sinners that a call to repentance should be most earnestly addressed. The righteous stand not in such pressing or immediate need of my help, therefore I am not come so expressly to call them, but sinners, to repentance. Hence we are taught to consider repentance in two senses—one, in which the first awakenings of the sinner are stirred up to a sincere and godly sorrow for sin, and to conversion from its practice to a new life; the other, in which the believer is continually exercised under a sense of his many

failures and short comings in his best duties, and of the mercy and love of GOD in CHRIST JESUS manifested towards him. These, as they are totally different in nature and degree, are to be carefully distinguished by us, that this primary and continual duty may be pressed according to its true and actual necessity upon each description of our hearers. Without this discrimination, confusion of mind is too often the consequence, and, ultimately, rejection of saving truth.

II. Secondly, let us inquire whom doth our Saviour here mean by the term sinners.

It must be evident, I think, both from the reason of the thing and the opposition of the two words in the text, that our LORD here means, in the first or chief place, open, outbreaking persons, who were living in commission of known sin—adulterers, fornicators, drunkards, profane swearers, thieves, liars, extortioners, and such like. These, as standing in the most open and imminent danger and in the most pressing need, engaged his most earnest sympathy and compassion for their miserable condition. Next, the more orderly and decent part of the community, who were nevertheless equally strangers to GOD and themselves, and equally regardless of the duties and ordinances of religion, living without GOD in the world; and, lastly, the religious part of the community, as having much to perfect and complete, even in an evangelical sense, of repentance and amendment of life.

To these three classes the term sinners will apply in different senses, as will also the nature and degree of that repentance to which they are called.

Of the first class there can be no dispute. They must repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance, or perish for ever.

Of the second there is more dispute, though the certainty is equally clear. The dispute, however, is with themselves and at their own peril, not with the appointments of GOD. Like the Pharisees of old, they may count that they are righteous, and look down with scorn upon the poor reprobate outcasts of society; but all the while they are just as far from GOD, as much unknown to any act of submission to his revealed will, as distant from the ordinances and public duties of religion, as the veriest profligate can be, with this most offensive addition to their guilt, that they justify themselves,

and make void and of none effect the wise and merciful appointments of God to save them.

Of the third class, there is not one entitled to the name of religious who does not take to him and herself, in the true and genuine sense, the appellation of sinner, and who feels not both the duty and the privilege of that repentance to which they are called.

To all, then, the appellation of sinners, made use of in the text, is found to apply; while there is, nevertheless, a sense in which it is more specially to be understood, and in that sense, whoever is not righteous in the Scriptural sense of the word, is a sinner who is called to repentance, who is exhorted to avail himself of this privilege, and thereby secure the salvation of his soul. For there are but two classes of persons in the world, the righteous and the wicked; in the sight of God there is no middle or neutral ground between these two. There are, indeed, degrees in sin, and consequently in guilt; but sin in any degree, unrepented of, is fatal, for the Scripture saith, "whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Hence the danger of allowing ourselves in what are called little sins, of thinking lightly of and neglecting the ordinances of religion, of comforting ourselves that we are not as great sinners as some others are. For, take notice, my hearers, we may be as notorious and open sinners in the sight of God as the most vicious profligates are in our sight; so that if a man perform ever so many duties, if there be any which he doth not perform, or if he avoid ever so many sins, and yet there be any he doth not avoid, he is still a sinner, who, without repentance, must perish for ever.

I come now, in the

III. Third place, to inquire what is meant by repentance.

The original and direct meaning of the word is, an after thought, a reaction of the mind, and may accordingly apply to any change of mind whatever, but in the case before us is to be considered exclusively as respects things moral and spiritual.

In this connexion, then, it will mean such an after thought as produces a change of mind or disposition on the serious subjects of God and religion. This after thought, the result

of reflection and consideration impressed on the mind by the Spirit of God, produces such a conviction in the heart of the guilt and danger of sin, as committed against the holiness and the command of God, as to fill the sinner with fear and dismay at the consequences, and with desire to be delivered from its power and from its condemnation. Hence arises that godly sorrow mentioned in the Scriptures, which worketh repentance unto life, and is opposed in the same Scriptures to the sorrow of the world—the mere regret for the consequences of sin, whether present or future, which worketh death. For sincere and genuine sorrow for sin as an offence against God is always accompanied with a change of conduct, or, as it is expressed in Scripture, "brings forth fruits meet for" or answerable to true "repentance," whereas, mere sorrow for the consequences of sin, as it has in it no element of godliness—of either the fear or the love of God—produces no such fruits; the love of sin remains, and wants but a suitable opportunity to be again indulged in.

Thus we see that true repentance does not consist singly in a change of mind or alteration of conduct, but in the union of both, springing from a religious motive. The true penitent does not only hate sin, but fears it and flees from it. He does not forsake some, say the grosser and more open sins of his life, but all and every sin. He does not content himself with the outward restraint of sin, but labors and strives for the destruction of its power in his heart. He does not only cease to do evil, but he learns to do well—becomes earnest, active, and diligent in the use and application of those means of grace which are appointed in the word of God, which he once neglected, perhaps despised. "Behold he prayeth," is the mark by which the angels of God discern the penitent; and the penitent who prays through the mediation of Jesus Christ, learns, sooner or later, that the prayer of faith is mighty to obtain the blessing of that God who is ever ready to receive humble and penitent sinners for his dear Son's sake; like the poor prodigal mentioned in the gospel, he comes to himself, he recovers his senses, he remembers his father's house—"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." He is seen

entering the house of GOD, engaging in the worship of GOD, walking with the people of GOD; and the joy felt in heaven over the sinner that repenteth, spreads its gladsome feeling over the Church on earth; every child of GOD rejoices to see another wanderer brought back to the fold of CHRIST—another immortal soul snatched as a brand from the burning.

Such, my brethren and hearers, is the true Scripture notion of repentance. Not merely a change of conduct, but a revolution of sentiment, a renovation of heart in its whole progress, wrought by the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, whereby the mind or disposition is wholly taken off from sin, turned round or converted to GOD, and set to obey his commandments. This is the repentance our LORD means in the text—that repentance to which he calls sinners by the gospel—that repentance without which there is no hope for them, without which they must perish for ever.

IV. Fourthly, I am to inquire what we are to understand by his calling sinners to repentance.

As sin originally separated us from GOD, so, while persisted in, it precludes us from all possible return to his favor. It must, therefore, be repented of and forsaken. That this might be rendered both practicable and acceptable, the ever blessed Son of GOD undertook the redemption of fallen man, by expiating their sins in his own person, and thereby procuring for them easier conditions of salvation than the rigor of the law demanded or the holiness and justice of GOD permitted, without an adequate atonement.

To this end, he took our nature upon him, suffered death upon the cross, and having thereby made satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, he became the mediator of a new covenant, in which, by repentance towards GOD, and faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, sinners might be delivered from the curse and condemnation of the law, and restored to the hope and the attainment of eternal life. This is the foundation of the gospel, and the subject matter of those glad tidings of great joy, which angels proclaimed at his birth, and which through the mercy of GOD have reached even unto us. By our LORD'S calling sinners to repentance, then, we are to understand his making known to them the terms and conditions of the covenant of grace, purchased by his blood, whereof

repentance is the first; together with the invitations, exhortations, promises, and threatenings of the gospel, whereby he requires, persuades, and commands them, in consideration of what he hath done and suffered for them, to forsake their sins, throw down the weapons of their rebellion, and follow him in the bright example of his holiness, humility, faith, and patience; giving them full assurance, by his glorious resurrection from the dead, that he had fully accomplished the mighty work of redemption, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers—that as he hath redeemed them to GOD by his blood, so hath he also purchased grace, or renewal of spiritual power, lost by sin, to enable them to fulfil the conditions required of them. This is properly his calling them to repentance; and thus in every gospel land are sinners called, by the word and SPIRIT OF GOD, to "forsake the foolish, and live," to "turn from the error of their ways, flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life."

Thus have I laid before you, my hearers, the outline of this leading doctrine of the gospel of CHRIST; of the persons to whom it applies, and of the authority by which it is pressed upon your attention. Take heed, then, how ye hear, for he that despiseth, despiseth not man, but GOD. As an ambassador of CHRIST, I pray you in CHRIST'S stead, be ye reconciled to GOD; I testify to all present, that except they repent they shall perish.

Lastly, to apply what has been said.

It is not my province, generally speaking, my friends, to pronounce who are the righteous, and who the sinners; but from the word of GOD, to lay before men those marks by which they may try themselves and their ways, and decide on their true condition in the sight of GOD.

By what you have this day heard, then, and by what your Bibles shall further teach you on this and every other subject connected with your eternal salvation, let me counsel you to examine whether you have repented or no. Many are the calls you have had, not only outwardly by the word, but inwardly by the strivings of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT within you. "To-day, then, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Every neglected call weakens your power and inclination to listen to the next, until you may be left to the

hardness of an impenitent and blinded heart. Oh, did you but know your danger, could you but apprehend how much may depend on this little moment, a last warning, perhaps, before eternity lays hold of some poor sinner present, you would not cast it from you with the neglect so many exhibit. But whether you will hear or whether you will forbear, I must deliver my own soul. Therefore I call upon them in the name of CHRIST, to repent of their sins, to flee to the mercy of GOD revealed through JESUS CHRIST for pardon and salvation, believing what CHRIST hath spoken, relying on what he hath promised, and observing whatsoever he hath commanded. Assuring every sinner present, that he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto GOD by him, and that there is none other name or means under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved, only the name and grace of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth. O, ask yourselves now, what it will profit you in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of GOD, when the LORD JESUS shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not GOD and obey not the gospel—what will it profit you, to have enjoyed all the pleasures of sin in this life, at the price of eternal misery in the next. Your most merciful Saviour now offers himself to you, in the words of peace and love; but in that day he will appear as your inexorable Judge. "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

And you, my brethren, who through faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST are accounted righteous before GOD, think not that you are unconcerned in this great and universal duty. Sinless perfection is not the attainment of this life, and daily experience must teach you how far short you come even of that which you know, and desire, and strive to attain unto. And herein is continual occasion for watchfulness, for self-abasement, for penitential sorrow, that we receive so much and return so little to the giver of every good and perfect gift to his creatures. Let this sense, then, of the goodness of GOD, deepen your repentance, strengthen you faith, increase your hope, and brighten your charity. Use seasons of retirement to enter deeper into your own hearts, to mortify

and cast out the remains of the old Adam, that the whole body of sin may be destroyed, and the life of faith perfected in you. "Keep yourselves in the love of GOD; looking unto JESUS the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of GOD, where he ever liveth, to make intercession for us."

SERMON XIV.

HOW TO COME TO CHRIST.

LUKE ix. 23.

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

It is worthy of particular notice, my brethren, and deserves to be carefully considered by every Christian, that the religion of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST made its way in the world, and prevailed over the various forms of Heathen superstition, and the corrupt prejudices of human nature, not only without any politic accommodation of its holy principles to the established notions, habits of thinking, customs and manners of the times, but with the most uncompromising rejection and condemnation, as sinful, of all that is most dear and pleasant to the natural man, most cherished and followed by the spirit of the world. That under such circumstances it should have succeeded, forms a very conclusive argument in favor of the divine original of Christianity and of its author. But when to this circumstance we add the confirmation derived from the unparalleled fact, that this religion made its way to the hearts of men, and accomplished its triumphs over the darkness and lewdness of the times, under the clear and explicit disclosure, that poverty, reproach, and contempt, that suffering in all its shapes, even to bonds, imprisonment, and death, was the portion which those who first embraced it were to expect in the present life, the conviction is irresistible, that divine power alone could have brought this to pass.

As from these facts we derive an unanswerable argument for the divine origin and obligation of the religion we profess, so may we also derive from it, my brethren, a sure and impartial standard whereby to determine our personal religion. For it is the same world, out of which the first Christians were called, that the gospel invites us to come out from.

The same corrupt nature, the same vicious propensities, the same preference of sensual delights, and the same determination of the affections towards earthly things, so visible in them, is equally present in us. The gross darkness of Heathen ignorance, and the disgusting impurity of Heathen manners, differ only in degree from the instructed and practical infidelity, and the more refined dissoluteness of modern vice, in Christian lands. In kind they are the same, and in the sight of GOD, perhaps, more hateful in us than in them; the same means, also, provided for their instruction, renewal, and sanctification, are afforded to us, and the same fruit unto holiness is unalterably required. As we are conformed to or separated from the vicious customs of the world in our day; as our affections are set upon things above, or tied down to the farms and the merchandise, the professions and the pleasures of the world; as we make open acknowledgment of the Christian faith, and live answerable to the requirements of the gospel; so is our spiritual condition, my hearers. The command, "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," is still in force to us as to the first Christians; and it is equally important to all present that the inquiry should be made, whether they are in such wise friends of the world, as to be the enemies of GOD; or have so learnt to use it as those who know that this world passeth away, and that in heaven only they have a better country—a more enduring substance.

The inquiry, whether we are truly religious or not, is only another form of speech for the inquiry whether we are in the favor of GOD or exposed to his wrath. An inquiry, my dear friends, which never can be indifferent to an immortal being, under the uncertainties of the present life—an inquiry to which it is my duty to call your attention, and for the determination of which, satisfactorily, you are furnished in the meditations suggested by my text. Have you come to CHRIST? Have you denied yourself and taken up the cross? Are you followers of JESUS, or followers of the world? These are questions which naturally grow out of this very solemn declaration of our LORD; and that you may be enabled to answer them understandingly and profitably, I will endeavor to explain and enforce the particular points of Christian duty contained in the text, in the order in which they there stand.

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

I. First, what are we to understand by the words, "if any man will come after me."

That these words refer to the obligation all are under to embrace the gospel to whom it is proposed, is too evident to require any proof. As the LORD JESUS CHRIST came into the world to save sinners, to instruct them in the will of GOD, and show them the way of life and happiness eternal, those who believed his divine authority and received his doctrine, were denominated his disciples or followers: to these he imparted his instructions in a more clear and familiar manner than to the multitudes who flocked to hear his preaching and see the miracles which he wrought, and to these he addressed those precious promises which are in a peculiar sense the property of those who are the children of GOD by faith in CHRIST JESUS. "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of GOD, but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables." "Whoso heareth my words and believeth on him that sent me, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven." "If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." Now, while it is undeniable that these are inducements sufficient to engage the attention of every rational being, it is no less clear that, to obtain these advantages, we must comply with the conditions on which they are offered, we must become the disciples or followers of CHRIST, we must learn of him, we must study his doctrine, obey his precepts, and follow his example.

The immediate reflection, therefore, presented to all present by this clause of my text, is this; Am I a disciple of JESUS CHRIST? am I a professor of his name and religion before the world? am I in communion with his Church upon earth? am I striving to attain his promises? And according as this can honestly be answered, is there ground of comfort or alarm to every one of you. Now, as you can all make answer with certainty upon this point, so can you understand, even by human analogies, that where a previous condition is required

it must be performed in order to reap the benefit. The invitation of the gospel, therefore, must be complied with on your part before there can be any hope of the blessings of the gospel. Come unto me, says CHRIST to every weary, heavy laden sinner, and I will give you rest. But if they never come, how shall they obtain rest to their souls? And how can any now come to CHRIST but through the ordinances of his Church? You may say, indeed, that you have already come to CHRIST by baptism; and so far your advantage is great; but do you not know that therein you incurred obligations which, if not fulfilled, will more deeply condemn you? Have you, then, fulfilled your baptismal engagements? If not, where is the profit of it unless you repent and do your first works, and by a true and lively faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST obtain the pardon of your sins, and be reinstated in that from which you are fallen away? Surely no reasonable person can suppose that the ordinances of religion operate after the manner of charms; and yet the great majority in Christian lands act as if this was the case, and never seem to apprehend, that to be entitled to the hope of the gospel we must fulfil the conditions of the gospel—must first come to CHRIST by an open profession of his name and religion before the world, and thenceforward continue in his word, that is, in obedience to his commandments—as the sole ground on which spiritual attainment and eternal life is promised. Nothing is more clearly declared in the gospel than this, that until we are in CHRIST by some personal act which the gospel prescribes and recognizes, we have neither part nor lot in the promises of the gospel. Our entrance into the covenant of mercy and grace by baptism in our infancy is valid and effectual until forfeited by personal sin, and when thus forfeited—as, alas! it most commonly is by those who arrive at years of discretion, or rather, as they should be called, of indiscretion —there is no other resource, no other refuge, than open repentance and acknowledgment of sin, declared reliance on the blood of CHRIST as the only atonement, renewed obedience to the law of life in the gospel, with humble dependence on the mercy of GOD for pardon and acceptance, through the merits and intercession of JESUS CHRIST. These GOD hath promised to accept from the sinner, truly penitent, unto jus-

tification of life, and having accommodated his grace and mercy so fully to our feeble condition, the conclusion is inevitable that less than this he will accept from no man who hears the gospel. And I pray and entreat all those who are sitting loose to this the first and indispensable duty of redeemed sinners, to reflect upon their condition, to burst the bonds of unbelief, to listen to the reason of their own minds and the voice of their own consciences, confirmed by the word of GOD, and pass the Rubicon, the narrow, and, I may say, the only obstacle which keeps them from the succor and help of that divine grace by which only the world can be overcome and salvation accomplished. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." But, my dear hearers, we must first come to CHRIST before we can even think of such religious duties as are here required of Christians, and still more before we can be enabled to perform them. The morality of the world may go a certain length in imitating the fruits of true religion, and thereby add much to the comfort and accommodation of the present life. Nor is it a light argument for the divine original of Christianity, that the mere copy of its virtues, by those who yet disown its power, should shed so benign an influence over the condition of gospel lands. But it can go no farther than the boundary of time. The shadow of religion passeth away—the substance only can endure the shock of dissolving nature and a burning world, and enter in within that vail where GOD sits enthroned in all his glory, and where mansions of everlasting blessedness are prepared for those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises of the gospel.

II. Secondly, "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself."

The religious doctrine and Christian duty of self-denial is grounded altogether on the fundamental doctrine of the fallen, depraved, condition of human nature. Were our reason unclouded by depraved affections, our choice unbiassed by a perverted will; were our faculties entire for the discernment of good and evil, and our strength unimpaired to resist temptation; there could be no occasion for inculcating this duty. But, situated as we are, my brethren, with the love of sin

predominant in our nature, it is not only profitable but essential, it is not only reasonable but indispensable, if we would enjoy the comforts of religion in time, and secure its reward in eternity, that we learn to deny ourselves. Yet who does not feel that this is the "hard saying" which we are not able "to hear," the great stumbling block to the reception of the gospel. Intuitively, almost, we anticipate its application to the things that are most pleasant to the natural man, and dread to encounter the privations which imagination is on the alert to magnify beyond their due proportion. To correct this propensity, then, and to place this indispensable duty on its Scriptural foundation, let us inquire what we are to understand by the self-denial here enjoined; and that this may be the more distinct and clear to your apprehensions, I will consider it both negatively and affirmatively; and,

First, religious self-denial does not consist in words or acknowledgments. The clearest views of Scripture doctrine, the most unqualified confession of our depraved and dependent conditon, the most forcible admission of the awful state of ruin into which sin hath sunk our nature, cannot meet the just requirements of this duty; and for this plain reason, because the duty is practical, whereas such acknowledgments are as much in the reach of the most selfish sensualist as of the most watchful Christian. And I mention this because it is now much the fashion among persons of religious profession to abound more in expressions of self-abasement than in acts of self-denial; and because it is quite common for persons who make no profession and have no concern with religion, to comfort themselves with the acknowledgment that they are poor, weak, sinful creatures, without a single effort to burst the chains of sin and struggle into the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made them free.

Self-denial does not consist in a sour, morose temper, refusing either ourselves or others the lawful, thankful enjoyment of all the blessings conferred on us by the good providence of Almighty God. On the contrary, as God loveth the cheerful giver, so doth he love a thankful receiver of his various blessings. To use so as not to abuse, to enjoy so as not to forget the Giver of every good and perfect gift to his creatures, is the condition on which they are bestowed, and

within which he giveth us all things richly to enjoy. A different view of the subject, equally opposite to Scripture and reason, has given rise to all the superstition and debauchery of monastic institutions, under the absurd notion that the salvation of our souls could best be secured by flying from the duties of that station in life which the providence of GOD had assigned us.

Nor yet does self-denial consist in such a neglect of the duties belonging to our worldly condition, as to defeat the industry and application due to its lawful improvement. A state of trial must ever be a state of activity and exertion; variety of condition, also, is a necessary part of its composition, and this variety, in all its grades, is among the talents committed to our trust. These are all capable of improvement to the glory of GOD and the good of our fellow-creatures, and, as there can be no improvement without increase, without an addition to the original stock, care and diligence, economy and industry, in our worldly callings, are religious duties, without which we cannot fulfil the obligations we owe to GOD and to our neighbor.

Hence, it is just as incumbent on the rich to exert a provident care and industry, and to avoid all extravagance and waste of their worldly goods, as it is upon the poor to use the same means to better their worldly condition, for both are bound by the law of Christian love to be ready and willing to distribute proportionally to the wants and necessities of all around them.

Secondly, self-denial does consist in relinquishing every thing that is contrary to the divine command, or injurious to our own spiritual welfare. This is the true meaning of the term, the practical operation of the duty, and within this boundary it must be exercised by all who would be considered followers of CHRIST. Hence, whatever is directly sinful, or indirectly leading to sin, however pleasant, however apparently advantageous it may seem, is the subject of this duty. The pleasures and the practices of the world, as they are formally renounced by every Christian at his baptism, are to be as constantly watched against in the exercise of self-denial. The inordinate affections of the mind, the unlawful gratification of the flesh, and the rebellious inclinations of our corrupt

wills, must all be restrained under the salutary control of self-denial. These wild beasts of our fallen nature, if I may so speak, must be kept in their cage, and the door carefully watched, for if they once make their escape it is a hard and a painful task to bring them once more into subjection.

Another branch of this practical duty finds its profitable exercise in the regulation and control of our understanding. As knowledge of divine things is derived from divine communication, it is a primary duty to submit our rational faculties to the wisdom of GOD, and "receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save our souls." Yet there is a pride, a loftiness, in the wisdom of the world, which would measure the divine mind by its own puny standard, and look down with contempt on the simplicity of the gospel; which dares to intrude into things not seen, and speculate on the mysteries of GOD as on some branch of natural knowledge. Against this most unreasonable and ruinous perversion of our highest faculty, self-denial must stand ever on its guard, and this the more resolutely, as it is unanswerably true, that in things spiritual, there is to us no other source of knowledge than the divine word, as contained in the Scriptures of our faith. These are to us "the law and the testimony," and without their supreme warrant, there is neither sense or safety in any system of faith and practice.

Connected with this, and very intimately, as experience demonstrates, is another danger, against which self-denial has to exert all its powers of opposition and mortification, and that is self-righteousness; in other words, the relying on the merit of our own works of righteousness, for acceptance with GOD. And I connect it with the pride of science, falsely so called, because it is the main danger of the better informed and more moral part of the community, who have never felt the plague of their own hearts, in thorough conviction of the absolute sinfulness of their nature, and separation from GOD; who speculate on the mystery of godliness, as a provision for cases more extreme than theirs, and receive not the LORD JESUS CHRIST as the LORD their righteousness. And if there is a condition under the light of the gospel, from which hope of mercy is precluded, it must be found in that pride of understanding which would be wise, not only above, but con-

trary to, what is written; which would defraud the Saviour of the efficacy of his death, and make that eternal life which he has purchased for sinners, the reward of debt, and not of grace.

Yet, my brethren, it is a temptation, however blasphemous, which we are all prone to entertain in some of its multifarious deceits, and from which nothing can shield us but that true self-knowledge which we obtain from the word of GOD, kept in constant operation by the exercise of self-denial. It is a scion from the root of unbelief, which must be torn from our hearts if we would be in such wise followers of CHRIST, as to obtain a share of that glory wherewith his unparalleled self-denial has been rewarded for himself, and for his faithful followers.

III. Thirdly, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily."

Under an established state of Christianity, and in the absence of all persecution on account of religion, it is not very easy to draw the line between the duty of self-denial and that of taking up the cross. To come after CHRIST, and to live in the exercise of self-denial, as just explained, amounts so nearly to any idea we can entertain of the particular duty of taking up our cross, that these words may be considered as expressing the full extent of the two previous duties combined; thereby denoting as marked a separation from the world, with as entire a dedication of ourselves to the service of GOD, as CHRIST himself presented, and as is compatible with our actual condition when compared with his.

Yet as there certainly is a sense in which the duty of taking up our cross, here enjoined, may be profitably understood and applied by all Christians, as distinct from the duty of self-denial, I shall endeavor to explain it in that sense in which it is applicable to existing circumstances in our religious condition.

First, it includes an open and public profession of the religion of our LORD JESUS CHRIST; the confession of him as the CHRIST of GOD, the promised Saviour of sinners; the thankful acceptance of the atonement of his death as the only sacrifice for sin, with obedience to the commands he hath left us in the gospel.

This may be considered as the lowest sense, indeed, in which the taking up the cross is to be understood. Yet it is certainly a part of the duty, and one which I heartily wish was more considered and acted upon than it is; for it is essential to any benefit by and through the LORD JESUS CHRIST. "He that is not for me is against me," says our LORD, and he threatens to deny all such, in the last day, as shall be either afraid or ashamed to confess him before men.

The words of my text also point to this meaning of the command to take up our cross. Many went after CHRIST to hear his doctrine, and see the miracles he wrought to confirm it as divine, who yet from various causes did not openly become his disciples; and we may reasonably suppose, that it was by way of rebuke and warning to such persons, that he expressed himself as in the words of my text. In like manner, in the present day, multitudes come after CHRIST, in so far as attendance upon the public ordinances of religion may be thus called, who yet go no farther; who take not up the cross in this sense of the words; who from some cause, alien to a just sense either of the benefits to be derived from CHRIST, or of the loss and danger incurred by thus tampering and trifling with this indispensable duty, hang upon the skirts of religion, as it were, without once realizing that awful day, when CHRIST shall justly say to them, I never knew you—ye were ashamed of me before men—I cannot confess you before my Father and the holy angels.

Secondly, to take up our cross daily, includes a ready and willing submission to those particular trials wherewith the providence of Almighty GOD sees fit to exercise our faith and prove our obedience. As self-denial consists chiefly in foregoing some present gratification, because inconsistent with the care of our souls, and contrary to the honor of GOD, the taking up the cross in this sense of the words, will consist in suffering patiently whatever of privation or of direct infliction the divine wisdom sees necessary to purify and perfect our fallen nature, to wean us from the world and prepare us for glory. This is the method by which the dross of earthly desires can best be purged off, and therefore are they sent. Our Saviour himself, as man, was made perfect through sufferings, and we must be made like unto him in this as in all

other respects, if we would be partakers with him in that glory to which his obedience hath exalted him.

Thirdly, to take up our cross includes, in the highest sense of the words, the being ready to encounter all worldly loss, to endure all worldly suffering, to submit to persecution, and even to the loss of life itself, rather than deny CHRIST or surrender our religion. Of this triumph of faith, of this fixed and unshaken trust in GOD our Saviour, thousands have set the example, not counting their lives dear unto themselves, so they might win CHRIST and be found in him. And though we are not called, my brethren, to such trials, yet are we called to possess the same believing, confiding spirit, the mind that was in CHRIST and in these his faithful disciples. The same grace, also, through which they were borne onward to the prize of their high calling, is yet in operation, and sufficient for every duty required at our hands; and sure we may be, that if our trials are lighter our obligations are higher, if less is required at our hands, the more thankful, the more faithful, and the more earnest we should be, in what is enjoined us; and that if we take not up the cross appointed for our day, CHRIST'S light and easy yoke, we must bear for ever the bitter cross of the curse of GOD, the insupportable load of everlasting torment.

Lastly—

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

To follow CHRIST means, in this connexion, to continue steadfast in the profession and practice of his religon, neither terrified by persecution nor seduced by temptation.

Perseverence in holiness is the condition of salvation, my brethren. "He that endureth to the end the same shall be saved," says our LORD, but if he "draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," says GOD. The reward of eternal life, as it exceeds all computation, as it is a free gift to undeserving creatures through the merits of CHRIST, is not to be lightly esteemed or trifled with, nor are the means of attaining it, set forth in the word of GOD, to be taken up or put down upon any calculations of present interest or convenience. "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of GOD." If the business

or the pleasures of the world, or the indolence or inadvertence of our corrupt hearts, are permitted to withstand or to neutralize the solemn assurances of death, judgment, and eternity, awaiting accountable beings, favored with the glad tidings of the gospel and furnished with the means of grace, "it were better" for us, my hearers, "never to have known the way of righteousness" than "to depart from the holy commandment delivered" to us; it were good for us that we had never been born, if we fall away from the offered mercy of GOD, and the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and break the solemn obligations undertaken at our baptism. "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life," says the faithful and true witness. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things. But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

What then is our part, my dear friends, under the undeniable responsibilities of our condition? Where is room even for hesitation under the vast alternative of life or death eternal? Let truth then prevail; let the reasonableness of our duty recommend it to our most serious attention; let the awful uncertainty of the present life throw its weight into the scale of our salvation, and bring us forthwith to CHRIST, prepared to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, and to follow JESUS in the way which he hath trodden before us, through all the changes and chances of this mortal life. Let us do this, my brethren and hearers, under the happy assurance that he, whose strength is made perfect in our weakness, will be with us in all our trials, and make good his encouraging declaration, that "his yoke is easy and his burden light." "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Learn of me—and ye shall find rest unto your souls." O that the answer may be from all:—"LORD to whom else shall we go, for thou hast the words of eternal life."

SERMON XV.

THE CAUSE OF NOT COMING TO CHRIST.

JOHN v. 40.

And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

Nothing is so fatal to our souls, my brethren and hearers, as indifference and carelessness on the subject of religion. Nothing forms so complete a bar to the grace of the gospel, as that obstinate unwillingness to be saved which is evidenced by those who resist the warning and instruction of GOD's word, the reason of their own minds, and the verdict of their own consciences, to say nothing of those strivings of the HOLY SPIRIT which ever and anon apply the truth to their hearts with such power as almost to persuade them to yield. "But they will not come to CHRIST that they might have life." Some deceit of sin—some flattering bait of the GOD of this world—some engagement with the things of time and sense, on which they are more bent than on the care of their immortal souls, stifles the conviction of guilt and danger, and delivers them over once more to the strong delusion which ends in their being hardened in sin. I speak not now of those bold contenders against GOD and the word of his grace who make a mock at sin, scoff at revelation, and, sufficient for their own expectation here and hereafter, deny the LORD that bought them, and trample on his blood—such cannot be expected to come to him for life;—but of that greater number on whom the word of life is bestowed in vain, for they search not the Scriptures—on whom warning is thrown away, for they heed it not—in whose hearts conviction is deadened by the care of other things, and by whom time is not measured by its advancement towards eternity, but as it promotes or retards the gains, the enjoyments, the disappointments, or the sufferings of the life that now is. Oh! what multitudes are in this dangerous condition in this Christian land, and

who are thus, partly from mistaken views of the doctrines of the gospel, but chiefly from thoughtlessness and carelessness on the subject of religion, adding force to the natural enmity of the carnal mind, and increasing the power of those temptations which lead them farther and farther from GOD. And shall no effort be made to show them their danger, and point them to a better course? Yes, by GOD's good blessing, this day shall be a witness for me in this behalf, and, I trust, for some of them, by showing them,

FIRST, what are the chief hindrances which prevent people from coming to CHRIST that they might have life.

SECONDLY, in what manner they must come to obtain this blessing.

And then by making, in conclusion, a short application of the subject.

"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

I. First, I am to point out the chief hindrances which prevent people from coming to CHRIST that they might have life.

The first and main obstacle is want of serious consideration. Few or none can plead ignorance of the great outlines of Christianity. But in religion, as in all other sciences, knowledge, when unapplied, differs in nothing from ignorance. Now to consider and apply knowledge, is a habit or qualification of mind to be acquired by practice and discipline, and it is the great art which makes education of every kind useful and profitable.

In religion especially, which to fallen creatures is in every sense a forced state, this habit of considering and applying the truths revealed to us lies at the very entrance of any advancement or progress whatever. Without this, whatever knowledge we attain to of GOD and ourselves, of the means provided for our benefit and the use we are required to make of them, is nothing but a mere speculation of the understanding, as destitute of any moral power over the will and affections as the remembrance of any abstruse mathematical demonstration. And yet we might well imagine, that were there any one thing, the intrinsic importance of which would bear down all opposition and engage exclusively the attention and endeavors of intelligent and accountable beings, it must be religion; for what is religion but the science of being

happy here and happy forever, and this upon as sure a foundation as the being and truth of Almighty God.

The nature of God and his just claims upon us as our Creator being once admitted, the way is open to all the wonders of his wisdom and love in the redemption of the world, through careful consideration. The plan of this mighty work is found to be so exactly suited to our condition, so adequate to the relief of our most pressing wants, so calculated to give certainty and assurance to what we must otherwise for ever have remained ignorant of, that the conclusion from this branch of the evidence is almost compulsory. But to produce any effect, it must be considered, must be dwelt upon, must be applied and carried out to the thoughts, and the words, and the actions of the man, must in this way be brought to bear upon the real complexion of his character and conduct as in the sight of God, as transacted before one who cannot be deceived, and whose judgment must ever be according to truth. It is by this process that we come to understand our true condition, to perceive something of the purity of God and of the malignity of sin as opposed to the holiness of his nature, that we are drawn to count up the endless years of eternity, and the tremendous sanctions with which it is made to bear upon the short and uncertain state of being which is hourly drawing us nearer and nearer to all that it has to enjoy or to suffer; and are led to entertain the solemn meditation—"What shall I do to be saved?"

It is by consideration only that we arrive at that conclusive proof in favor of revelation, which grows out of the exact agreement of the representation therein given of man fallen, with what experience and observation have taught us of ourselves and others. It is by this we perceive that the plan of redemption, though embracing the world in its ample enclosure, is yet special to every individual sinner. So much so, that were there not another but himself in the boundary of the universe, the whole of this glorious provision of the love of God, in the wonderful comprehension of its breadth, and length, and height, and depth, would have been needed to bring that single sinner back to holiness and God.

Thus far can consideration of what is revealed to us, aided by that divine grace of which all baptized persons are par-

takers, bring those who give themselves seriously to it; and to this very end is the whole counsel of God addressed to us as reasonable beings, and made to bear upon hopes and fears which we can estimate and apply.

But there is one step further to which consideration of divine truth can lead us, and that is to prayer; for prayer is the fruit of a sense of want and danger, and is the evidence which heaven requires of our sincerity. On this is suspended all its mighty benefits to us in the gift of the Holy Spirit. "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." "For if ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

Now the Holy Spirit is that mighty agent in the great work of our salvation, without whom we can do nothing. It is by him that thought, and reflection, and consideration of divine things, is prompted and guided. It is by him that the truth is witnessed, and faith strengthened to receive and apply it. It is by him that sin is shown in its true colors, and its most just sentence brought home to the personal conviction of the sinner. It is by him that the heart is softened to penitence, and the prayer of faith put forth "with groanings that cannot be uttered." It is by him that God is revealed as accessible to the penitent through Jesus Christ, and hope inspired through his prevailing intercession. It is by him that the things which are Christ's—the atonement of his death, the power of his resurrection, and the grace of his mediatorial kingdom—are taken and showed unto us. It is by him that these unspeakable gifts of the mercy of God and the love of Christ, are applied to the peace and comfort of the soul, through the faith of the operation of God, and thus is the message of the gospel of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord made life and power to all who give it the attention it deserves; while to the thoughtless and unconcerned, to the dissolute and worldly minded, who never carry forward their thoughts to the awful realities of death and judgment, who are so occupied with time that they forget eternity, who turn a deaf ear to the warnings of God's word, and stifle the misgivings and convictions of their own

consciences, the voice of God within them,—these things, though known and understood in some degree, are yet mere speculations of something distant and fortuitous, not near and dear realities on which peace and comfort in time, and happiness in eternity, unchangeably depend. And thus do we see, my brethren and hearers, how want of consideration bars us out from the very entrance of religion; how it stops up all the avenues by which saving truth might reach the heart, and spreads the darkening vail of unbelief over our own wants and heaven's mercies. Especially do we see how it blinds the mind to the efficacy, sufficiency, and necessity of Jesus Christ to the hope of a sinner or the acceptance of a saint—and why it is, that under the clear light of the gospel the compassionate reproach of our blessed Lord to his then hearers, contained in my text, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life," can yet be addressed to such multitudes in every Christian land—why in this little congregation there are so many who care for none of these things. Alas! "Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider," and therefore it is that they will none of me. But whom else will you have? within the bound of thought is there any thing that can fill the desires of an immortal spirit but God only? And will you carelessly remain ignorant of him and of all his plans of mercy and love for your good? or, knowing them by the hearing of the ear, will you cast them under your feet, and madly rush upon destruction? Yet this is what too surely awaits you if you give no care to the thought of your souls. You may say, in the levity of your minds and the blindness of your heart, We feel no want, we experience no uneasiness or injury to the pursuits we are engaged in, from the absence of religion—we perceive no need of Jesus Christ to our happiness, nor is there any "form or comeliness" in him "that we should desire him." Alas! I know it is even so, for I have been as you are, and may God awaken you. But, nevertheless, your want remaineth—in alienation from God, opposition to his holy nature, and unfitness for his holy presence—while death is drawing nearer and nearer every day to transmit you to his righteous judgment. O, ask yourselves, are you prepared for it; have you an answer ready for the searcher of hearts, as you have for your own con-

sciences; have you one that he will be quieted with, that you know he will accept? Alas! were the real truth known, there are moments when you dare not trust to it yourselves, when you feel that all is not right, when something whispers in your heart—There is another life, there is a God, there is a judgment day, there is a heaven, there is a hell! O let it now take possession of your most serious thought, and carry you out to that full and faithful examination of the claims of religion, of your own want and sinfulness, of the means and mercy provided for you in the gospel, which you have hitherto neglected. And let me tell you for your encouragement, that among those means you will find a Saviour, just such as your soul would desire, who has redeemed you to God by his own blood, who has called you to the hope of the gospel, who ever liveth to make intercession for you, who invites you to come to him for pardon, peace, and eternal life, and who, this day, meets all your obstinate disregard and contempt of his merciful long suffering, not with wrath and vengeance, but with the mild and gracious reproof, "ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

But let me also warn you, my friends, it will not be always thus. There is a limit to the long suffering even of God; there is to every individual under the gospel a day of grace, within which the door of mercy stands open for his return, but beyond which, it is for ever barred against him. Remember the foolish virgins, who slumbered and slept until their oil was all consumed; they went and bought more, lit up their lamps and came and knocked, but found no admittance.

I thought when I began, my brethren, to have gone on with an enumeration of those particular hindrances which prevent men from coming to Christ, such as unbelief, self-righteousness, love of the world, false notions of the mercy of God, procrastination, and, what lies at the root of all the rest, the carnal mind, the naturally hostile disposition of every fallen creature against the holiness of God.

But as all these, with the exception of the last named, either originate in want of consideration, or are increased in their power over us, by carelessly shutting our eyes against the light, it would be needless repetition to go over them separately. It being evident to the plainest mind, that un-

belief can never stand against the sincere and honest examination of revelation and its proofs, the serious consideration of the nature of GOD, and the condition of man; that self-righteousness can have no place in that man who has studied himself even slightly; that there can be no gain in giving our immortal souls in exchange for that which we cannot keep even if we had it; that the mercy of GOD is made known to us that he may be feared and sought unto, not that he may be trifled with and mocked; and that to beings who know not what a day may bring forth, to put in the distance the awful concerns of death, judgment, and eternity, is the foolishness of folly and madness.

With respect to the carnal mind, the original corruption of our nature, I would say a few words. While it is admitted that no extent or seriousness of consideration is competent to remove this taint and infection of sin, that being the prerogative of the HOLY SPIRIT only; certain it is, that if we never consider, that is, reflect seriously, on our state, our chains will be riveted the faster, and our hereditary enmity to GOD increased.

Whereas by meeting what is presented to us, on the high authority of a message from GOD, with the care and attention it deserves, we obtain not only the knowledge and confirmation of a most dangerous and fatal disease, but are furnished with a sovereign remedy against it, are directed to the great physician of souls, encouraged to take the medicine he prescribes, and watched over and nursed under its operation by his HOLY SPIRIT, to the entire renovation of our nature, the fruit being unto holiness and the end everlasting life.

II. Secondly, I am to show you in what manner we must come to him to obtain this blessing.

To understand this aright, we must consider who JESUS CHRIST was, what he did, and what he did it for, together with what he is now. Our only authority, therefore—the Bible—informs us that JESUS CHRIST is the Son of GOD, one with the Father from all eternity; that he came to this world, took upon him our mortal nature, and appeared in the lowly condition of a servant. In this state he spent a life of toil, privation, and suffering, was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" that after preaching the gospel and instruct-

ing mankind, both by precept and example, in that pure religion he came to establish in the world, he suffered himself to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and submitted to a most cruel and ignominious death upon the cross. But why did he submit to all this? The same authority informs us, that it was all for man, and for man's salvation; to redeem us from the curse of the law, broken by sin, he was content to be made a curse for us; to reconcile GOD to his creatures, he bore our sins in his own body on the tree; by shedding his own most precious blood he atoned for the guilt of sin, and he submitted to death to purchase eternal life for all who believe and obey him. Having thus fulfilled the will of the Father, and finished the work he had given him to do, he rose from the dead, ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for man, pardon of sin, restoration to GOD's favor, and the HOLY SPIRIT to renew them to repentance, to give them the victory over sin and death, and prepare them for heavenly glory and eternal life; and he is now exalted to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, all things in heaven and in earth being put in subjection under him, where he ever liveth to watch over his Church and people, to extend the gospel in the world, to accomplish the number of his elect, to guide them through the trials of time, and, when all shall be concluded, to raise up their mortal bodies by his SPIRIT dwelling in them to meet the judgment of the great day, and to be rewarded or punished everlastingly, according to the conditions of the gospel now preached unto them. And thus are we led to see with what dispositions of mind, in what way and manner, we are to come to this ever blessed, all powerful, and most merciful Redeemer, that we may have life.

The first thing, therefore, we should be sensible of, and that most deeply, is, that sin is that dreadful and destructive evil the Bible describes it to be—eternally opposed to all GOD's perfections, eternally hated of him, and justly deserving his everlasting wrath. Which is demonstrated to us by his exacting from his only begotten Son the penalty due to it by the justice of his holy law, to prepare the way for its pardon.

Next, a humbling sense of our own many and grievous

offences against GOD, both in thought, word and deed—with a true and genuine sorrow for our ingratitude and baseness against our Creator and Benefactor. There is indeed a sorrow of the world which worketh death, by being mistaken for that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto life. And herein lies the distinction: What is denominated the sorrow of the world, springs from the present consequences of the particular sin or sins upon ourselves, and would never have been felt, had no disappointment or suffering followed. But godly sorrow, true contrition for sin, has respect to the offence as against GOD. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," says David, making his confession to GOD, even in as heinous crimes as adultery and murder, committed against his neighbor. And herein is the worth and efficacy of the one over the other manifested, inasmuch as godly sorrow for sin always includes the ill done to our neighbor—for without reparation and restitution where either is possible, there is no true repentance. Whereas the sorrow of the world has no respect whatever to the offence as against GOD, but is entirely personal and selfish.

A third disposition of mind is a true hatred of sin, and an instant forsaking of it in all its practices, with a hungering and thirsting after righteousness. "Cease to do evil, learn to do well." "Make me a clean heart, O LORD, and renew a right spirit within me."

Lastly, a complete sense of our own helplessness and insufficiency, with a humble, yet confident reliance on the promised mercy of GOD, and the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. "Ye are saved by grace, through faith." "Our sufficiency is of GOD." "Without me ye can do nothing." "My grace is sufficient for thee."

With such views and such dispositions of mind, let us come to the LORD JESUS CHRIST for the two blessings we all stand in need of—mercy to cover our sins, negligences and ignorances; and grace to renew our hearts daily before him in righteousness. Let us come to him "drawing near with true hearts, in full assurance of faith," encouraged by his most gracious invitation. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." These words are the full warrant for every sinner to break the chains of his

bondage to death, and come to the LORD JESUS, that he may have life. And O, that while "the SPIRIT and the bride also say come, he that heareth" may say—I come! "and he that is athirst" may "come, and take of the water of life freely."

I come now to make a short application of the subject, and of what has been said upon it.

First, to those who come not:

I wonder if any who are present in this dangerous condition, could give an answer to—Why do you not come? Can you plead ignorance of the message and its infinite importance to your souls? Surely none present can say so. Will you say that the invitation has never been made to you? GOD is my witness, that I have not failed for the space of seven years to press it upon you in every shape I could devise. Must it not be, then, for the reason given by our LORD, in my text; Ye will not come? Ye do resist the HOLY GHOST then, and what must the end be of them who put offered salvation from them? But you will say, we have never thought of these things, we have not considered them. This I believe, and therefore have I pressed this duty upon you to-day. I trust there is no settled hostility to religion in any of you; but in the mean time, life is wasting apace, and carelessness is just as dangerous as unbelief—for as faith cometh by hearing, so does application to JESUS CHRIST, and all the blessed effects of religion, flow from considering carefully what we hear. Of this, what is set forth for our learning in the Scriptures is one continued proof. You say you have not considered these things. And was it not just so before the flood, under the preaching of Noah? But did they continue thoughtless and unconcerned, think ye, when they saw the waters begin to rise and pursue them from hill to mountain? Or did they curse the carelessness and security which thus betrayed them to destruction? And how will it be with you, continuing thus, when death knocks at the door of your chamber, when your reviving bodies hear the sound of the last trumpet, when you see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, the frame of nature dissolving, the judgment set, the books opened, the universe assembled, and the sentence of eternal death about to be passed on "all who know not GOD and obey not the gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST?"

Did not Sodom also and the cities of the plain exhibit an instance of the same careless indifference and want of thought? While Lot warned and exhorted, they danced, they sung, they feasted and made merry; they bought, they sold, and laid themselves out for the world, till the day that GOD rained fire and brimstone upon them from heaven, and took them off in the pride of their hearts and ripeness of their sins, to the fire that never shall be quenched. And does not our LORD say that it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than for careless, delaying gospel sinners?

But, perhaps, as it is becoming fashionable, you will say you do not believe these things. And, what then; "shall your unbelief make the truth of GOD of none effect?" When the minister of GOD earnestly warns you of these things do you say we do not believe him? But upon what grounds do you refuse to believe him? You confess that you have not considered them, and, therefore, cannot be competent to decide their truth or falsehood. O deceive not your own souls, but say at once, we will not believe them, for that is the real truth. And was it not just so when Noah preached, and Lot warned, and the Roman armies encompassed Jerusalem? But did the water, or the fire, or the sword, therefore, stay their vengeance, and are not all these expressly set forth to us as types and representations of that great and dreadful day when the LORD JESUS shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire to punish the ungodly?

When eternity is thus at issue, shall any who have souls to be saved continue careless? shall youth think it too soon, manhood be too much occupied with the world, or old age think it too late, to come to CHRIST? a vain thing to consider and lay to heart the things which make for their peace? GOD forbid. To the young in particular I would now speak, and through them to every age.

To you, then, who build upon your youth as an excuse for the neglect of religion, I would put but one question, to show you the danger of such presumptuous procrastination. Have you made a covenant with death, or received from the Almighty an assurance of long life? If not, whence this blindness to the common experience of mankind? Do the young,

and the healthy, and the robust never die? Or is not death busier with our early years than with all the rest? O forget not, my young friends, that it is only here one and there another, that comes to old age. Remember the poor man who said to his soul—"Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But in the midst of his security God said unto him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee"—and apply it as a solemn warning to all who put off coming to Christ on the presumption that it is time enough yet, or from a love of the company, the amusements, the pleasures or the business of the world. You may fancy you are happy, my young friends; you may flatter yourselves with many years, and in present enjoyment drown the claims of your God and Saviour upon your souls; but all this must come to an end. And what then? In all this time what preparation is made for death, for judgment, for eternity—where is your pardon, your interest in Jesus Christ; and without these how will you face your last enemy? Oh! what an awful thought it is to have to meet death with the fixed conviction that he is but the forerunner of the second death, which knows not how to die or to escape from eternal misery and despair—that dreadful death from which Jesus now calls you, but you will not come to him, that you might have life, even life eternal. That miserable death which you now choose in the error of your life, in opposition to truth, to reason, to interest, to the mercy of God and the love of Christ. Oh! terrible voice of most just judgment, which shall then be pronounced upon you, when the Lord Jesus, who died to save you, who in this world so mercifully invites you to come to him but ye will not, shall say unto you—Ye would not come to me, ye would not be made holy in time, ye cannot be made happy in eternity—Depart, therefore, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

But, thanks be to God, my brethren, there is a relief from this dark and dreary prospect, in the blessedness which awaits those who, in this the day of their visitation, come to Jesus Christ for life, who learn of him and find rest to their souls. From that happy moment they are his peculiar care. The power of his providence and the blessings of his grace are

all engaged in their behalf. Wisely, but darkly and wonderfully sometimes, he orders their course through the world, but whether in prosperity or adversity all things are made to work together for their good; and in the closing scene of all our hopes and fears, he will be found as faithful in his promises as in his threatenings. When those who have here rejected him shall be banished for ever from the presence of the LORD and the glory of his power, those who have here come to him, and have endured unto the end, shall enter into the joy of their LORD, into that "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away—where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

In this blessed hope, dear brethren, let us purify ourselves, even as He is pure. Let us walk worthy of our heavenly calling, adorning the doctrine of GOD our Saviour in all things; ascribing to GOD the Father, whose love and mercy provided our deliverance—to GOD the Son who died to procure it, and to GOD the HOLY GHOST who won us over to enjoy it—all the glory and praise of our salvation, now and ever, world without end.

SERMON XVI.

REVERENCE OF CHRIST.

MATTHEW xxi. 37.

But, last of all, he sent unto them his Son, saying, They will reverence my Son.

The favor and providence of GOD towards the Jewish Church and nation, as being the vineyard he had planted and had watered with his heavenly dew—the doctrine of the law and of the prophets, with the unfruitful and ungrateful conduct of that people—form the groundwork of this parable: In which, by a very lively representation of their case, and such as came home to the consciences of all who heard it, (for they at once united in acknowledging the just retribution due to their unjust and rebellious refusal of the rights of the lord of the vineyard, their cruel treatment of his messengers, and avaricious murder of his only son, and in deprecating the consequences of such conduct,) our blessed LORD endeavored to awaken them to a right sense of the enormity of their guilt and imminent danger in slighting and rejecting this last overture of heaven's mercy; and in its application to the gospel Church to give to Christians in all ages the same warning, the same instruction. For what the Jews once were, we now are—the LORD's vineyard. "Ye are GOD's husbandry, ye are GOD's building," says St. Paul to the Corinthian Church; and as from them, so from us, the owner of the vineyard yet expects those fruits, those grateful and obedient returns to his fatherly love and abundant goodness, which not only justice but feeling, sincere love on our part and thankful subjection, should lead us to render. But, alas! how much like that of the Jews is the present state of the Christian world. How are we become dead to the peculiar blessings of a state of covenant relation to GOD, cold to the continued proofs of his love, and insensible to the awful threatenings which are denounced against the abuse of his mercies. How is that name which,

for the suffering of death for us, GOD hath exalted above every name and made the only passport to his favor, and by the which we, as Christians, are called—how is it lessened and lightly esteemed, and even profaned and blasphemed, and the truth of his everlasting word and the convictions of his HOLY SPIRIT put aside by us, for the world and its vanities, for our own vain conceits and groundless imaginations, as by the Jews of old. We cannot, indeed, equal them in infidelity, for obvious reasons. We cannot resist the evidence of CHRIST'S miracles to our senses, because they are not wrought before our eyes. We cannot revile him to his face. We cannot crucify him at the gates of Jerusalem. But we can exceed their guilt in all these things by resisting the demonstration of the SPIRIT to the truth of the gospel, the convictions of our own consciences, the concurring testimony of eighteen hundred years, and the actual witness of the state of this very people, who are to this day outcasts and unowned, because they disowned the only begotten Son of GOD as their promised Messiah and offered Saviour; and we can and do crucify him afresh every hour of the day, and put him to an open shame, by leading unchristian lives. This Scripture figure, so emphatically applied, by the apostle Paul, to ungodly Christians, we are too apt to consider as a mere figure of speech, or, what is more common, not to consider it at all. But if there is any truth in the promises and threatenings of the gospel—if none whom GOD is pleased to call to the knowledge of his grace by the revelation of JESUS CHRIST, can excusably remain neutral, even, to the hopes and duties growing out of it, to the faith and holiness required by it, then should all such most deeply fear incurring the particular guilt thereby denounced, even in a higher degree than those very Jews who crucified the LORD of glory. For it cannot be said in our behalf as was in theirs, that we do it ignorantly in unbelief; every person under the gospel being fully informed of the person, office, and dignity of JESUS CHRIST, "the author and finisher of our faith."

It may be profitable for us all—both those who profess themselves his disciples and those who, though they are spared only through his intercession and provided with the freeness of his grace to the attainment of eternal life, yet feel

no sense of what they owe to his love for their souls—to consider seriously the two following points:

First, the obligations we are all under to reverence the Son of God, as the text expresses it.

Secondly, in what manner we shall best declare our reverence of him.

I. First, then, though the reasons and arguments which enforce this obligation are all of the weightiest nature, yet the one referred to in the text may properly enough be considered the chief.

The first argument, then, that calls upon us to reverence the Son of God, and consequently the message he brought us from the Father, is the greatness of his character, the superlative dignity of his person.

It was a most natural expectation in the owner of the vineyard, that his tenants would show a peculiar regard to the last messenger he sent, who, as his only son and of course his heir, was next in station and authority to himself. And here we may observe, my friends, how exactly the whole moral of the parable is made to bear upon the most general feelings and reasonings of our own minds, and how it includes us all, by the judgment we unhesitatingly pass upon things of a far inferior kind. For just as certainly as we should consider the refusal of a just claim aggravated in proportion to the dignity and importance of the person employed to make it, so sure may we be that we condemn ourselves by refusing or contemptuously disregarding this last and greatest of all God's prophets. And certainly our reverence should always be proportioned to the known or supposed importance of its object. Now beyond all dispute, not only in the dignity of the messenger but in the importance of the message, the gospel far transcends any and every other interest whatever. What, then, say the Scriptures concerning the person and character of Christ? for the Scriptures are the only authority we can safely follow in such an inquiry.

God, (says St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews,) "who in time past spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who is the brightness of his glory, and upholdeth all

things by the word of his power, who is made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." And here let me observe, that we have a most express declaration of this apostle to the divinity of our blessed Saviour; he not only declares his superiority to the angels, but refers that superiority to a cause perfectly distinct from any act of creation, to-wit, to an inherited and consequently inherent superiority; than which no other mode of expression could better have conveyed to our limited understandings the true and plain meaning of that fundamental article of the Christian faith, "the Son of GOD, begotten, not made." So likewise, in writing to the Colossians, this same apostle styles CHRIST "the image of the invisible GOD," and tells us, that by him "GOD created all things whether in heaven or in earth;" and St. John—who wrote the last of all the apostles, and lived to hear the divinity of his adorable master doubted and denied—to meet this damnable heresy, declares in the outset of his gospel, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with GOD, and the word was GOD; the word was made flesh and dwelt among us; he came unto his own and his own received him not."

Now these passages of Scripture, with many others to the same purpose, though they do not explain to us the formal nature or essential being of this Son of GOD—a subject which, with our present faculties, we could not be made to comprehend, neither are we in the smallest degree concerned to know it;—yet they teach us what is abundantly sufficient as well as perfectly intelligible, namely, that his character is supremely excellent, his dignity supremely eminent, far above the numberless orders of beings in the universe; which is unanswerably a most sufficient argument why we should pay him the profoundest reverence.

Secondly, we are further bound to reverence this heavenly messenger, from the importance of the message itself with which he was sent into the world. Now let us ask ourselves whether any other than an affair of the highest moment could have induced the Almighty Father to employ in the execution of it so exalted a personage? Why, our own principles of reasoning and acting will answer the question; and in truth, it was nothing less than our eternal salvation, which

infinite wisdom saw could no otherwise consistently be provided for, and which infinite love undertook to perform. It was to purchase life for condemned sinners; to reconcile a rebel world to a justly offended sovereign; to make satisfaction to his violated law, by suffering the penalty therein denounced against every transgression and transgressor of it. It was to command us to forsake our sins—and to assure us of the divine mercy if we did so; to instruct us in pure and undefiled religion, and to engage us to all the duties we owe to God and to each other, by the clear revelation of a future state, to be adjudged to each one of us for everlasting happiness or misery, according to the deeds done in this body. For all which purposes it was necessary that a body should be prepared for this heavenly messenger, that in the familiar converse of our nature he might teach us, set us an example of patience, submission, and holiness, to follow, and, in the very nature which had sinned, offer a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement and propitiation for the sins of the whole world by his death upon the cross.

Let the importance, therefore, of the errand on which the Son of God came to us, the vital importance of it especially to each man's individual concern, be a fresh argument and a prevailing reason for paying him that veneration—may I not say that grateful sense of benefits conferred—to which he has so just a claim. "Therefore let us give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation," wrought out for and communicated to us, not by angels, but by the Lord of angels?

Thirdly, all our obligations to reverence the Son of God are increased and completed by the consideration that he is the last messenger, and his message the last overture, heaven will send us. "Last of all," says the parable, "he sent unto them his Son," which might serve to convince us that God intends no further or other means of salvation for us than that made known by his Son. And surely if this is not sufficient, no other that even infinite wisdom could devise, would prevail with us. For more gracious terms of recon-

ciliation, a more dignified or powerful intercessor, clearer instructions in our duty, or more glorious rewards or fearful punishments, for the performance or neglect of it, are not within the range of possible expectation. Let no one, therefore, deceive himself either with vain words or more vain hopes. Let no one vainly expect that another Son will come to us from the offended Father, or that we can come again to him otherwise than by and through this Son whom he hath sent. No, my brethren and hearers, it is the last time, the last offer of his mercy, the last trial of our reverence and obedience; and if this be slighted "there remaineth no more" or other "sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall consume the adversaries."

When the husbandmen in the parable had refused submission to their master's son, there was nothing left but to punish the aggravated guilt of all their former wickedness, and utterly to expel them from the vineyard. "What, then, will the LORD of the vineyard do to those husbandmen," is the question which each one of us should put to ourselves, as respects the gospel; and the answer stands ready recorded, with which the equity of our own minds accords: "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard to others, who shall render him the fruits in their season." This very vineyard is now let out to us, my hearers, and wo be unto us if we take not warning by the fate of those who were cast out for refusing him who came to redeem and save them.

Such being our obligations to reverence the Son of GOD, I am to inquire,

II. Secondly, in what manner we shall best declare our reverence of him; that is, with what disposition of mind, with what course of external behaviour, we shall most truly manifest our reverence and regard for him and the message he came to deliver to us.

Now the first step towards a due veneration of CHRIST and his religion, is, seriously to consider what in truth it is, the purpose it is to answer, and our need of such effectual help. To drown such a reasonable duty, either in the cares or the pleasures of life, or by the shorter process of unbelief; to dis-

miss the claims of our souls, and join the great multitude who live here as if there were no hereafter—no God, no Saviour, no heaven, no hell; or, if they acknowledge God and a future state, yet will take no pains to ascertain whether he has spoken to us, and what he has said concerning our future interests, but risk their eternal all upon the sandy foundation of some notion of their own shallow conceptions—why what is this but to count ourselves, and to show that we are, unworthy of that eternal life to which, nevertheless, we vainly hope to come. My hearers, "see that ye refuse not him that speaketh from heaven," for it is a complete bar, while it is persisted in, to all religious advancement, to all sense of favor conferred on us through him, to any regard for his person, or interest in the mercy he hath purchased for a world of sinners; it dries up the very springs of faith and love in our hearts, for the source of all gratitude is the remembrance of our benefactors, of the favors we have received from them. And it is infinitely more owing to inattention than to ignorance, that men are so little moved with the arguments of religion, so little affected, so slightly influenced by them.

We too seldom consider the dignified character of that Son of God who was sent to us by the Father, or the commanding nature of the business on which he was sent, and of course forget and become dead to the regards we owe to his person, as well as his office. Whereas if these subjects were made familiar to our thoughts, and thus came to possess our hearts, which they would surely soon do, they could not fail to produce those outward expressions of reverence, and that conscientious care to fulfil our duties, which is the only evidence of the religious principle being formed within us.

It was certainly upon this principle that our blessed Lord originally instituted the sacrament of the last supper, which was designed to cherish and keep alive, in the minds of his disciples, the remembrance of himself, of his ministry upon earth, of the relation he bears to them, of the great things he did and suffered for them, as the proper foundation of that practical reverence and regard they are to pay him "in all holy conversation and godliness," after the bright example he hath set them.

Now you are all called and invited to become his disciples,

and to learn of him; you have all of you sufficient leisure to think on these all important subjects, even at home in your own houses, and with your families; but especially by meeting together for public worship, are they presented and pressed upon you. Do not, therefore, waste that leisure in careless indolence or sinful idleness, or make a preached gospel the savor of death to your souls, but wisely improve every opportunity God affords you, to bring your heart more and more under the influence of revealed truth, and your life under the law of faith. This is the fruit which the Lord of the vineyard requires, and which alone he will accept at your hands.

Had the husbandmen in the parable rightly considered who the last messenger was their master sent to them, how just the demand he came to make of them, what forbearance and indulgence the Father had already showed them, with the consequences that must inevitably follow, if they persisted in their rebellion—had they reflected at all on these things, they would doubtless have repented of their past iniquity, and received him with becoming marks of humiliation and sorrow. But, alas! they did not give themselves time to reflect; as soon as they saw him they determined to murder him. "This is the heir, come let us kill him and seize on his inheritance." And thus do unreflecting sinners "deny the Lord that bought them," and, full of themselves, and ripe in rebellion, turn away from the word of the truth of the gospel, beholding no form or comeliness in Jesus Christ, that they should desire him.

Secondly, we must show our reverence for the Son of God and for the gospel which he brought to us from his Father, not only by having and maintaining an habitual sense of its excellence and importance in our minds, together with the practice of its duties in our lives, but, also, by being earnest for its credit and advancement in the world, beginning with our families and branching out as far as ability and opportunity serve. This will lead us to avoid the company and fellowship of all persons who, like Solomon's fools, "make a mock at sin," or treat religion scornfully, or who speak irreverently of God, profaning his holy name, or lightly or disrespectfully of our Maker and only Saviour Jesus Christ.

Especially will it lead us to be watchful against all such abominations in our own families.

The very sound of profligate, profane discourse, damps that reverence for sacred subjects which almost every creature feels, until corrupted by some such wicked art. With respect to young people more especially, the effect is dreadful. It destroys their native diffidence, sows the seeds of impiety in their tender minds, draws out the latent hostility of the carnal mind to GOD, and is often the first cause of their everlasting ruin. Indeed, to those who are more advanced in life the influence of such associates is always more or less injurious; for there is an insensible conformity in the thoughts, words, and actions of those who live much together, which marks distinctly the tenor of their conversation in life.

Let us imagine a number of men in a similar situation with the husbandmen in the parable. Let us moreover suppose that only some of them had a design to abuse their master in the manner there described, and that these wanted to bring the others over to their schemes. They would naturally begin with arguing them into a contempt for their master, making light of his authority and power to punish, ridiculing their fears, scoffing at a danger so remote, and inflaming their passions with the present enjoyments and advantages their crime would put them in possession of. By which means they would not only harden themselves, but gradually infuse their poison into the hearts of the better disposed, until they were all mad enough to join in any desperate project. In like manner does it come to pass in the world, where the young, and thoughtless, and comparatively innocent, are exposed to the contagious company of the profane or practical despisers of CHRIST and his gospel. The impious jest, the well-turned ridicule, the bold unbelief, the cool defiance of heaven and hell, manifested by such persons, gradually overcome the guards both of nature and grace, set the passions in a flame, and by magnifying the pleasures of a life set free from the restraints of religion, tempt them to pluck the forbidden fruit, and to become as miserable as their tempters. And shall no voice be lifted up in behalf of the young and rising hope of this gospel land, and ring in the ears of professing parents their bounden duty in this re-

spect? Yes, my brethren, there shall be one, who, however lightly esteemed, shall not fail fearlessly to counsel you to shut your doors against the irreligious and ungodly, however amiable their manners or pleasing their conversation; for the master whom they serve is ever on the watch to prompt and to give the opportunity to counteract your pious care, and to sow those bitter seeds whose certain fruit is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

Thirdly and lastly, the strongest proof we can give of our reverence for the Son of God will be, sincerely and thankfully to own and acknowledge him in all the dignity of his character, faithfully to obey his laws, and diligently to copy the bright example he hath left us.

It is set forth to us in the parable, my hearers, that the business on which the servants, and last of all the son himself, was sent, was to receive the fruits of the vineyard. In like manner it is required of us to render to our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ, those fruits of the gospel which it was designed to produce in us. Now by those fruits the Scriptures universally mean, the good influence which religion has upon our conduct in life, in the exercise of faith, hope, and charity. Teaching us that a holy and righteous conversation in the world is as essential to the character of a Christian, as the production of its proper fruit is to the value of a tree in your garden; and as every such tree that bears no fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire, so will God finally destroy every man who openly disclaims the gospel, or who pretends to be religious while he is barren of good works.

And is this the unalterable truth of heaven's unchangeable decree? Then God be merciful to this barren gospel land—God be merciful to the thousands who hear the joyful sound of salvation through the Son of God, yet are like the deaf adder which will not be charmed. God be merciful to those who, led away with the error of the wicked, openly "deny the Lord who bought them," and not only refuse the fruits in their season, but join in casting out the heir, and would dethrone him from the glory he had with the Father before the world was. And God be merciful to his people, and to his little flock in this portion of his vineyard, and keep them

by his mighty power, through faith, unto salvation. Dear brethren, let us manifest our reverence for our blessed LORD by a yet more earnest rendering to him of the fruits of that love, trust, and obedience, we profess to him. In this day of rebuke and blasphemy, when the love of many has waxed cold, let us cleave to our first love, and, honoring the Son even as we honor the Father, make all men see "what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in GOD, who created all things by JESUS CHRIST, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of him." "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his SPIRIT in the inner man; that CHRIST may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of CHRIST, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of GOD."

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the Church by JESUS CHRIST throughout all ages, world without end." AMEN.

SERMON XVII.

CONFESSION OF CHRIST.

MATTHEW x. 32, 33.

Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

"O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end," was the earnest and affectionate apostrophe of Moses to the Israelites, under the prophetic view which he had of their defection from GOD, in becoming indifferent and insensible to the wonders, providences, and judgments, by which they were declared his peculiar people. And is there not occasion, my brethren and hearers, for a surprise and a concern of an equally impressive character, when we look round on the state and condition of this gospel land, and behold the multitudes, who, dismissing from their consideration the claims of JESUS CHRIST to their love, veneration and obedience, live here as if hereafter had no account to settle with them individually, and eternity no retributions commensurate with its everlasting nature? Is it not a heart-sinking prospect to survey any assembly of Christian people, and count up what a small proportion of them are known, even by outward profession, as the disciples of CHRIST, or have, in any shape whatever, brought themselves within the terms upon which alone heaven offers its mercy and proposes its rewards to our fallen race? to behold the thousands who, from infancy even to grey hairs, have had it rung in their ears, that there is but one only name and means under heaven for men to betake themselves to for reconciliation with GOD, yet are, nevertheless, trifling away their little and daily shortening span of being in the frivolous vanities and insipid dissipations of folly and fashion; or, more gravely occupied, are exclusively devoted to the god of this world, and the portion he has to bestow; or, still more shamefully

abandoned, defy heaven's King with their daily blasphemies, and outrage even the decency of a world that lieth in wickedness, by the grossness of their impiety? Alas! my hearers, is this picture overcharged, or is the record too true to be falsified by all the subterfuges of lies which the practical deniers of CHRIST and his gospel, of GOD and his Son, resort to, to hide from themselves the direct and positive bearing of the awful declaration contained in my text? If the offer of mercy to sinners is limited by conditions to be performed on their part, and the conditions themselves be openly and clearly propounded in the offer, then must this mighty question be within the reach of every man's determination who has access to the record; and if among those conditions there should be one paramount, to which all the others are subordinate and consequential, then must it be still more readily determined to which of the two grand divisions of this world's population we belong. To think otherwise of what heaven in its mercy and wisdom hath revealed to us, for our government and direction, for our comfort and assurance, is to defeat the whole gracious plan of man's salvation, to throw the veil of mystery over what is plain and practical, and by our own act to bring a cloud over that Sun of Righteousness which hath arisen upon the world with healing in its wings. Yet experience and observation prove to us that it is the case with thousands, who, on the gratuitous assumption of a mysteriousness in practical religion, settle down either in unbelief, or, what is just as fatal, some unwarranted scheme of general mercy which is to prove effectual for their eternal happiness, even though unsought and unobtained. Hence the carelessness and indifference to the gospel and its message of mercy. Hence the coldness and deadness to the high interests of eternity, and to the only means whereby to secure its unfading glories, so prevalent in the world; and hence the contemptuous neglect of JESUS CHRIST, "the author and finisher of our faith," which stamps the ungrateful character of man with its most odious feature.

Had such persons, indeed, never heard the words of my text; had they no knowledge of the nature and office of Him who uttered them, the case were different. But, alas! it is not so. They have grown up under the sound of the gospel;

thousands of times has it been propounded to them, and their consciences have borne witness to its truth, but they have put it away from them; they have seen of all descriptions of persons, from the most gifted and cultivated grade of intellect down to the poorest and most illiterate of their fellows, brought under the influence of CHRIST's religion, and counting it their highest privilege to confess the name of JESUS, not only under the favorable circumstances of established Christianity, but in the face of tortures and death, as their only but all sufficient hope and assurance of eternal life. These things have they seen and known, but alas! they have not considered them; like the Israelites of old, they have never brought them to bear upon the deep anxieties of a dying bed, upon the eternal interests of an immortal soul about to appear before its Judge laden with sin.

But, my hearers, "we must all stand before the judgment seat of CHRIST." He is not only offered as our Saviour, but is constituted our Judge. As he hath bought and ransomed us, so will he alone determine our everlasting condition according to that unchangeable word which he hath spoken unto us. In that word you hear it declared by the Judge of quick and dead, that on the confession or denial of the LORD JESUS CHRIST by us in this world will depend our condition in the world to come. Very immediate, therefore, is the interest which we all have in settling what is comprised in this Christian duty, lest in the most trying moment which either time or eternity shall ever witness, we find our expectations disappointed, our hopes confounded, and all the day dreams of our own righteousness and of GOD's mercy swept away by the irreversible "I never knew you" of our righteous judge.

I shall, therefore, endeavor to show you what we are to understand by the terms confess and deny, as here used by our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and then conclude with some practical inferences from the subject. Not, my friends, that there is one among you to whom the very sound of the words does not convey the awful import of their meaning and application to your individual state and condition, as respects the account you have to give in for all GOD's mercies, and especially for the grace of the gospel—no—but if, happily,

through God's good blessing, I may win some of you over to count the cost at which you sacrifice to the world the present peace and solid comfort of the gospel, and the future acknowledgment of him who is King of kings, and Lord of lords.

"Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

In common speech, to confess or deny means, to acknowledge or disown something that is affirmed or offered; and though the words as used in my text might with perfect safety be thus limited in their application, seeing the gospel is the record of the testimony which God hath given to the world concerning the person and office of Jesus Christ; yet in the language and usage of Scripture, they carry with them a more extended and inclusive meaning, involving not only acknowledgment or denial, but acceptance and rejection likewise, together with the temper and disposition of mind with which we act. Hence, to comprehend the full force of this passage of Scripture, we must bear in mind what it is that is proposed to us, to be acknowledged or disowned, received or rejected, with the ground or reason on which the proposition is constructed. Now, as this involves the whole of that revelation which God has made to us, it includes our entire acceptance or rejection of it. In this no qualification whatever can be admitted, not only because of its author, but because each part is so connected and interwoven with all the rest, that the minutest and apparently most unimportant circumstance could not be withdrawn without injuriously affecting the whole. In the most extended sense of the text, therefore, to confess Jesus Christ is, with a thankful believing spirit to embrace the message of mercy God hath sent to us by him as the foundation of our faith, the ground of our hope, and the rule of our life. While actually to reject revelation, or carelessly to neglect the mighty interests therein made known to us, is in the same sense to deny him, to treat with contempt the condescending interposition of heaven in our behalf, and to bar ourselves out from any possible benefit from this great salvation.

To set forth, however, more at large, the particulars in

which the confession of JESUS CHRIST mentioned in my text consists, we must observe,

First, that it includes the acknowledgment of his divine nature—"Immanuel, GOD with us," or in our nature; that is to say, that the Second Person in the Trinity emptied himself of his essential glory, had a body prepared for him, and came down from heaven to this ruined world, to complete the atonement he had undertaken to make for the sins of the creature, and redeem fallen man from the curse of the law which he had broken, becoming, in consequence, an alien and an enemy to GOD, the slave of sin, and the prey of death, both temporal and eternal.

This acknowledgment of JESUS CHRIST as "GOD over all, blessed for ever," is fundamental, my hearers, and lies at the very threshold of any and all saving faith. For however high our imaginations may soar in the idea of created excellence—however omnipotent and effectual we admit the will of GOD to be in the choice and appointment of the means to the fulfilment of his purposes—still there is a flaw in our title to eternal life, my brethren, if he through whom alone we hope for it and have even now the assurance of it, hath it not in himself. Yes, my hearers, if he who died for my sins on Calvary was not GOD in all his essential properties, clothed in my mortal nature, then is there no atonement yet made for them adequate to their infinite demerit in the eye of sovereign purity and holiness: I am yet in my sins, I am yet unredeemed, nor will the hope I entertain equal the weight of a feather to counterpoise their damning nature. But blessed be GOD, my brethren, it is not so; for "he that believeth hath the witness in himself that GOD hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son—and this is his commandment, that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father."

To disown the deity of the Saviour, then, or to pervert the testimony which GOD the Father hath given of it by GOD the HOLY GHOST, or to qualify with any shade of creatureship this only foundation of Christian hope, is to deny the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and just such a denial too, as will render all other sin needless to draw from the lips of the glorified JESUS, the awful rejection on his part, "I never knew you." O my

dear brethren and hearers, be upon your guard against the many vain talkers and deceivers, who are once more at work to overturn this sure foundation stone of the Catholic faith; arm yourselves with "the sword of the SPIRIT," and in the "more sure word of prophecy," behold him spoken of both as GOD and man, and, therefore, just such a mediator as our case needed, just such a Daysman betwixt GOD and us, as might lay his hand upon both in the great controversy of this world's rebellion. Cast the anchor of your soul in this sure-holding ground, and then let infidelity rage, you shall not be moved away from the hope of the gospel, you shall not be shaken though high and gifted men set their seal to the falsehood; and in a coming day, from which I counsel you never to turn away your thoughts, when all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble, then shall the "well done my good and faithful servant" of thy LORD and thy GOD, confess and own thee before his Father and the holy angels. O glorious and blessed hope. Who that feels it but must lift up his voice against this damnable heresy, which wrenches from fallen man both time and eternity.

Secondly, thus owning JESUS CHRIST as the eternal and only begotten Son of GOD, we must witness this good confession of him, by openly and heartily embracing the religion he hath established in the world, and following the holy example he hath set us.

That this is a reasonable duty, the dignity of his person, the nature of his office, and the unspeakable benefits conferred on us by and through him, demonstrate, independently of any future consequences, whether good or bad. What, then, let me ask, should be the impressiveness of this duty upon our hearts, when we read, as we do in the text, that an open profession of CHRIST'S religion before the world is essential to our reaping any benefit, either here or hereafter, by what he hath done and suffered for us. "Whosoever shall confess or deny me before men, him will I confess or deny, accordingly, before my Father which is in heaven." And is it so, my hearers, that simple failure to profess ourselves openly to be the disciples of the crucified JESUS, will pass us to the left hand on the great day of eternity? That however orderly and exemplary our lives may have been, however

free from the great and crying enormities of the openly profane and ungodly, that however the praise of men may have followed us, this one neglect shall stamp us as deniers of GOD and his CHRIST? Yes, it is so; as surely as heaven is now recording the thoughts of every heart in this congregation, it is so; because the failure, however unimportant it may seem, is direct rebellion against heaven's King, and saying in so many words "we will not have this man to reign over us."—It is so, because it is direct evidence that we are ashamed of the gospel of CHRIST. It is so, because it demonstrates that the world, in some of its delusions, has more hold upon our affections than the honor of GOD, or the eternal interests of our immortal souls. It is so, because it is in pointed disobedience to the express command of "the author and finisher of our faith."

But do the Scriptures speak thus decidedly upon this point? Yes, verily. "Wherefore GOD, also, hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that JESUS CHRIST is LORD to the glory of GOD the Father." "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels'." "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." What, then, becomes of the delusion under which so many labor, who in the main are not actually opposed to the religion of the gospel, and even cherish something like hope towards GOD through the LORD JESUS CHRIST, whilst they are unknown to any Christian profession? What possible excuse can be made for them in this neglect, when the many express texts of Scripture which bear upon the point are strengthened and enforced by the very nature of the subject, and by the positive declaration of our LORD himself, that in the mighty strife between light and darkness, between sin and holiness, between heaven and hell, for our souls, there can be no neutrality permitted, we must of necessity take sides, and that openly, so as to be known as soldiers of JESUS CHRIST, or confederates and servants of the devil.

"He that is not for me is against me," saith the Saviour, "and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Do non-professors hear this, and yet continue unconcerned? Do the wavering and double minded hear it, and not burst through the cobweb excuses which keep them in the verge of sin and death? Does the careless and thoughtless sinner, who is openly fighting against GOD, hear it, without realizing the inevitable doom that awaits him? Will any plead ignorance of the conditions on which salvation is offered? Why, on such an interest as eternity, the very excuse condemns him who makes it. Will any one say that they choose and prefer damnation? No, not one. Yet they could not take a more certain method to ensure it than to "deny the LORD that bought them." Oh! what a deep and desperate delusion has "the god of this world" spread over "the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of CHRIST, who is the image of GOD, should shine unto them." Oh! how many amiable and estimable persons there are, of whom every thing that is lovely and of good report can be witnessed by all who know them, who are yet unknown to the LORD JESUS, as confessors of his only saving name. Oh! what a death-doing mischief it is, that the men of name and note among us, of wealth and influence, of learning and leisure, think scorn of confessing the name of CHRIST, and never consider the deadly blow which their descending example inflicts upon religion and morals, and upon the peace and order of social life; nor yet of the awful account they have to give in, in this respect, for themselves and others. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end."

The open and outward confession of the name of CHRIST, though in itself of such importance as to render useless whatever else we do, this being refused, yet is no otherwise effectual to our salvation, my hearers, than as it binds us to the profession and practice of his religion. Whatever he hath done and commanded, therefore, that are we to observe and do; and this not only once or occasionally, but constantly, throughout the whole course of our pilgrimage here. For he hath set us an example that we should follow his steps. Here, then, my brethren, the whole personal history of JESUS of

Nazareth is set forth as the model by which we are to frame and fashion the course of our lives. Whatever of patient, prayerful submission to the will of God was manifested by him, must, in our measure and degree, be exemplified by us. Whatever of non-conformity to the world, in its vain and vicious attractions to power and pleasure; whatever of self-denial, humility, meekness, and holiness shone in his conversation in the world, must mark our course through its temptations, provocations, and disappointments. Whatever of mercy, benevolence, ready forgiveness of injuries, and righteousness in rendering to all their dues, was shown and observed by him, must also be shown and steadily followed after by those who would be his disciples indeed. As he fulfilled all the public and private duties enjoined by the Jewish religion, so must we be found walking in all the commandments and ordinances of that which he hath established in his Church, not only as trials of our obedience, but as means of his grace. That these are required of all who name the name of Christ, and hope for a share in his heavenly kingdom, is clear beyond controversy, as it also is, that only through the power and grace of our Redeemer can fallen creatures be furnished to fulfil them. How, then, let me ask, can those who deny the Saviour, by refusing themselves to the profession of his religion and the participation of its ordinances, the utmost of whose acknowledgment of him is occasional attendance on the public worship he has instituted, in whose families the voice of prayer and praise is unknown—how can such, I say, entertain the slightest hope, either of grace to perform their duties, or of mercy to obtain acceptance for such poor, broken services as the best of us can render? And yet talk with such persons in a more serious moment, and you will find a sort of careless unformed reliance upon Christ and his merits, for their future happiness, or rather for their escape from future misery; or see them at the approach of that hour when this world and all its promises is about to fail them, and you will find them as busy and as earnest in their calls upon the Saviour, as intent upon the forlorn hope of a death-bed repentance, as eager to grasp at his sufficiency to save, as if the name of Christ acted like a charm, and the mighty purpose which brought him from

heaven to earth, stretched him upon the cross, and consigned him to death, could safely be sported with by the rebels he came to redeem. Oh! the deceitfulness of sin. Oh! the perverseness of the unrenewed heart. Oh! the deadly enmity of the carnal mind, even against a GOD of love and salvation. Gracious LORD, put forth thy Almighty grace, and quicken us all to our duties and privileges as Christians.

Thirdly, our confession of JESUS CHRIST must be witnessed in the face of persecution, tortures, and death, should we thereto be called. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me—and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. Yea, and he that hateth not his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Therefore, "he that" by denying me "findeth his life," or any other present good, "shall lose it—and he that loseth his life," or any other present good, "for my sake, shall find it." Hence, my brethren and hearers, we may learn to estimate the vital importance of an open profession and constant perseverence in the faith of the gospel. For if the Christian, who, to avoid persecution, concealed his profession, or at the stake, overcome by the terrors of a cruel death, and to escape from it, denied and renounced his LORD and Master, did by persisting in such denial, blot his name out of the book of life, how much more shall the same righteous principle sweep into perdition those who are either afraid or ashamed to take upon them the light and easy yoke which our Redeemer hath laid upon us. If, indeed, the fires of persecution were let loose upon us, though there could be no excuse, there would be more pity and compassion for those who thus barter eternity for time. But where neither loss, nor disgrace, nor suffering, is to be encountered, how shall we not rather receive greater damnation, if we continue to put away from our hearts the solemn warning and express condition of my text—"Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

In this short passage of Scripture what a wide range of thought is opened to us, my friends. Yet through whatever varieties of required faith and commanded duty it may lead

our meditations, it ends in that awful close when an assembled world shall stand before its Judge, and the confession or denial of us, by JESUS CHRIST, be conclusive to each one for happiness or misery eternal. And it binds us down to the great master principle by which our acceptance or rejection will then be determined—faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST for pardon, life, and salvation, openly professed, steadfastly persisted in, and bearing fruit unto holiness.

What shall we say, then, to these things, my hearers? What is the only improvement that we can all make of them? Why this—Let us no longer be ashamed of the gospel of CHRIST! "Take" the Redeemer's "yoke upon you" as the first and indispensable step to the attainment of his grace, for while you refuse to come to him it is in vain to expect any help at his hand. "Learn of him" by reading, meditation, and prayer; and the teaching of his HOLY SPIRIT shall guide you on your way and show you that "all things are possible to him that believeth." He will strengthen you to overcome the world in the fear of its scoff and in the snare of its unhallowed pleasures and pursuits. He will lead you through all the wonders of a spiritual change, from faith to faith, and from grace to glory, till a "well done" from your heavenly Master, Almighty Saviour, and righteous Judge, shall crown your repentance and renewed obedience with eternal life.

And you, my professing brethren, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, while you take to yourselves the holy comfort of his promise in the text, let it arm you with strength and engage you with affection to walk worthy of it, that being found "in all the commandments and ordinances of the LORD blameless, your light" may "so shine before men" as to "adorn the doctrine of GOD our Saviour in all things."

Much depends upon your example, my Christian brethren, for the praise or reproach of the gospel, for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, or the growth of that infidel spirit which threatens the downfall of all religion, in the casting away of the only hope which heaven in its mercy has vouchsafed to fallen man, in the LORD our righteousness. Show yourselves, then, a living "epistle" of CHRIST to be

"read of all men," in life and conversation conformed to the gospel of CHRIST, and while you encourage yourselves in the holy comfort of your "acceptance in the beloved, rejoice with trembling," for you are yet on trial, and he who hath promised to confess you before GOD warns you "that not every one that saith to" him "LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of his Father which is in heaven." Of doing that will our blessed Saviour hath set us a most pure example. By that, then, as your polar star, steer your course through the trials and temptations of this world. To that, as your copy, labor and strive to bring both your outward life and inward spirit, that the mind which was in him being in you, you may rise with him to the life immortal, and pass to a full reward in glory and blessedness for ever, through the merit and righteousness, the power and grace, of this JESUS our LORD and our GOD; to whom, with GOD the Father, and GOD the HOLY GHOST, three persons and one GOD, be universal glory and praise, world without end!

SERMON XVIII.

FAITH IN CHRIST THE ONLY CONDITION OF SALVATION.

John viii. 24, last clause.

For if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.

It is a strong confirmation of the external proofs we are furnished with of the divine original of Christianity, that its leading truths and fundamental doctrines should be the full and clear disclosure of those original, indelible, and universal impressions on the heart of man, which are independent of the fortuitous circumstances of country, complexion, and education. And I have often thought, my brethren and hearers, that when Christian navigators, in the first range of discovery, found continents and islands peopled with beings like themselves, though of a strange speech and different color, when they saw the priest, the altar, and the victim, invariably accompanying their worship of an unknown but acknowledged God, they must have felt the deepest conviction of a common origin, a common nature, a common guilt, and common hope; they must have seen revelation confirmed, and "as the new vine is found in the cluster," so was the cross of Christ, and a propitiation for personal guilt by the blood of another, shadowed out in their ignorant superstitions, as the one only hope of our fallen race.

And may not we, my friends, by an honest attention to the frame of our own spirits, to what passes within us, when serious thought realizes the condition of our being, the account we have each to give in to God for his gifts of nature and grace, and when conscience summons up in dread array the actual sins and shameful neglects we are guilty of towards our Maker, or when danger surprises guilt into fear and sinks the boldest among us into dismay at the near prospect of a death bed unprovided for—may not these and the many other intimations which the "still, small voice" of God now whispers to our hearts, prompt us all to inquire seriously

into our state, to seek after the best information we can obtain, and to try what is presented to us as a message from heaven, by its outward proofs, by the internal witness we all have in its agreement with our previous impressions, and by its fitness to relieve our most pressing wants, in the cheering light it sheds over the otherwise dark and anxious anticipations of a future being, and in the fruit of its truth believed and its counsel followed. Would not this be the part of prudence as well as interest on so momentous and imposing a subject? And how can any man be said to have acted an honest or even a rational part by his immortal soul, who has not made a sincere and persevering effort, under the direction of the gospel, to secure its hope and enjoy its comfort?

"If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins," says a messenger from heaven, accredited to our senses by all that can avouch the authority of heaven, and to our hearts by every impression which truth, duty, and interest, can give to feeling and consciousness. And what do we, too many of us, but set to work to invalidate the testimony rather than examine the proofs—to dispute the dignity of the messenger rather than consider the message itself—to cavil at the conditions rather than thankfully to embrace a free and gracious offer of mercy and salvation—to enlist the powers and faculties, not of rational but of rebellious creatures, and the stores and resources, not of wisdom, but of science, falsely so called—to obscure and resist the truth rather than to promote the present and eternal welfare of all around us, and the glory of the Giver of every good and perfect gift to his creatures; while by so doing we contribute to bring a night of darkness and despair over the moral world, taking from faith its foundation, from hope its comfort, from charity its motive, from fear its sanction, and from righteousness its reward. And is this a result to be desired, my friends? Are the checks to human depravity so plenty and so efficient, that the pride and vanity of learning may safely and innocently be allowed to sport itself with interests which have no other measure than eternity? Yet such is the inevitable result if the words of my text rest upon any lower authority for their claim to your attention than that of heaven's King and this world's Judge. And I were a betrayer of Christ,

accountable as I know that I am, and speaking to those who must meet me before his judgment seat, if I proposed them to you with less than their weight, as the words of Him "who cannot lie"—with less than their authority, as the unchangeable word of the Most High GOD. As such, therefore, I shall proceed, in the fear of GOD, to explain and enforce them.

"For if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."

The structure of the sentence requires us to consider the words in the same light as those to whom they were spoken.

Prophecy and expectation, grounded on the fulfilment of a remote promise made by the Almighty to a fallen world, of which the Jewish nation were the depositories, and with which the whole frame and polity of their state was inseparably interwoven, led that people to look forward to the advent of their promised deliverer with the most intense interest. That blessings which language labored to describe were to accompany his appearance, they were fully assured; but of the particular nature and kind they were, with a few exceptions, altogether ignorant. Vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind, corrupt in their morals in proportion to their departure from the spirit of their religion, ambitious of worldly power and grandeur, and pressed under the yoke of foreign and Heathen despotism, they overlooked the spiritual application of their inspired writings, and from the kingly titles and supreme dominion ascribed therein to their Messiah, expected and desired only a temporal deliverance, and the re-establishment of their ancient kingdom in unchangeable supremacy over all the kingdoms of this world. Hence, when JESUS of Nazareth appeared in the lowly condition of a servant, and opened up to them the nature of that kingdom which he came to set up—when he explained the spiritual extent of that holy law which GOD had given them, and, denouncing their sins, called upon them to repent and believe in him for pardon, grace, and everlasting life—when he showed the kind of deliverance he had undertaken to achieve for them, and, instead of that worldly power and grandeur which they fondly anticipated, required them to renounce their proud and vain glorious expectations, and to follow him in humility, self-denial, and holiness, to a kingdom not of this

world, they rejected him almost to a man, and with one voice exclaimed, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Yea, when his predicted forerunner, whom they all acknowledged to be a prophet, publicly proclaimed him as the promised Messiah, as the Son of God, and "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world"—when prophecies fulfilled to the very letter, and miracles wrought before their eyes, confounded every reasonable ground of opposition and refusal, their perverseness was sharpened into malice, and they conspired to take away his life. With this view they watched all his motions, laid snares for him in his speech, and when the innocence and wisdom of his life defeated all their attempts, at last bribed one of his intimate friends to betray him into their hands.

In one of those attempts to ensnare him, the conversation of which my text forms a part occurred, in which, having baffled a deep laid scheme to involve him with the civil or ecclesiastical rulers of the country, he proceeded to set before them the dreadful consequences of continuing to reject his person and doctrine, to warn them that he was not to remain much longer with them, and that if this the day of their visitation was neglected, their ruin was irrevocably decreed. "I am the light of the world." "I am from above, I am not of this world. Ye are from beneath." "If ye were Abraham's children ye would do the works of Abraham." "Ye do the works of your father the devil, and because I tell you the truth ye believe me not." "I go my way, and whither I go ye cannot come." "Ye shall seek me, but ye shall die in your sins." "For if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."

The words of my text, therefore, are an epitome of the gospel, an abbreviated manner of setting forth that method of salvation which the mercy of God has provided for sinners, through Jesus Christ. And while they briefly but forcibly declare both the danger and the remedy, and enforce the grand Christian doctrine of salvation by grace through faith, they bind down the attention of every serious mind to the personal interest of the sinner in the atonement of the cross. Ye are sinners, says our Lord to the Jews; and in such sort sinners, that notwithstanding your being God's chosen people

—notwithstanding your dependence upon the promises made to your father Abraham—notwithstanding your confidence in the sacrifices and expiations of the law given you by Moses—yet as Abraham saw my day, and though afar off, rejoiced and was glad, and by faith in the promise only was justified and accepted, and as Moses himself, and your law with all its provisions, were but types of me, and pointed to me, so must you also, by personally believing in or rejecting me, be partakers of the promise, or be cut off from the hope of Israel. "Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." "I am that bread of life." "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

In like manner it is said to each one of us—Ye are sinners, and no otherwise than by faith in the only begotten Son of God, can you escape either from your sins or the awful penalty denounced against them by the unchangeable law of God.

But as with the Jews so with us, my hearers. Though he tells us the truth, and because it is the truth, and we feel assured that it is the truth by a testimony not to be mistaken, yet too often we believe him not. That is, we do not act upon the conviction thence arising, as we usually do on far inferior interests, from convictions which have less certainty.

For instance: were I to ask this congregation, man by man and woman by woman, whether they did not know and feel, in other words, were convinced, that they were sinners, in the Scripture sense of the word, and as such could have no confidence in themselves to meet with safety, the righteous judgment of God, would there be any found who could honestly say that they even doubted about it? Yet many I fear would have to say, in the same honesty, that this sense of sin had never been so attended to and acted upon as to drive them to Jesus Christ, the only physician of souls. But were I to ask the same persons, whether, when laboring under a bodily disease they thus act or in managing a temporal interest they thus hesitate, and put off what is needful, would they not be obliged to answer differently? Yet surely the danger from a bodily disease, or the loss or gain of a tempo-

ral interest, is neither so certain or so great as in the case of the soul. Nor can there reasonably be supposed the same ground of reliance on the judgment of a friend, the skill of a physician, or on the efficacy of the counsel and means which they advise, in the one case as in the other.

By this analogy, then, let us be instructed, my friends. For as surely as a curable distemper may prove mortal to the body when the skill of the physician and the means he prescribes are neglected, so will the disease of sin prove fatal to the soul unless arrested in its progress by the grace of the gospel, and deprived of its virulence by the blood of CHRIST.

"If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."

This mode of expressing himself, made use of by our LORD, called the Jews at once to consider and compare the circumstances predicted of their Messiah with what was passing before their eyes. And, had prejudice and prepossession allowed them to search those Scriptures to which he so often referred them, they must have seen the fulfilment of prophecy stand out in such bold relief as to draw from their whole nation the acknowledgment of Nathaniel—"Rabbi, thou art the Son of GOD, thou art the King of Israel."

That this was a mode of speaking familiar to the Jews, when their expected Messiah was the subject, we learn from different instances of its use in the Scriptures. Thus, when Philip, obeying the Saviour's call, communicated the circumstance to Nathaniel, "We have found him," says he, "of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, JESUS of Nazareth the son of Joseph." And when John the Baptist, desirous to satisfy his disciples that JESUS was the Messiah, sent them to him, his message was expressed in the same peculiar mode of speaking—"Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" And that it was purposely made use of by our LORD on this occasion, we have good reason to infer from his answer to John's message—"Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." Which answer, as it is a literal application of the prophecies to the times and marks of the Messiah, so was it intended to give to them and

to all other inquirers, that substantial and convincing evidence which springs from the coincidence of a deep and wonderful counsel, a declared purpose, and an exact fulfilment; compared with which no other proof possesses so complete a power over the understanding, neither is any other so marked with the impress of heaven, or so well calculated to produce conviction in every fair and unprejudiced mind. Hence it was that our LORD made use of it to confirm to his immediate disciples the other proofs they had of his person and character—"Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass ye may believe that I am he." And hence the effect which they have recorded that it produced upon their faith—"When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them, and they believed the Scripture, and the word which JESUS had said." In which, let it be observed and remembered, that it was not simply our LORD's ability to foretell future events which confirmed his disciples, but the plain and evident connexion and agreement of long recorded prophecies with the person and character of JESUS CHRIST, the time of his appearing, and the events of his life and death. The former would have entitled him to the prophetic character only, in which he had many predecessors, but the latter pointed him out as the object and end of all prophetic inspiration, the promised "seed of the woman," the "angel of the covenant," the "Shiloh" unto whom "the gathering of the people" should be, the great prophet whom Moses told the Israelites GOD would "raise up unto them of their brethren, the LORD GOD of the holy prophets," the expected Messiah of the Jews, the appointed and only Saviour of sinners, "GOD manifest in the flesh," to "destroy the works of the devil," "GOD over all, blessed for ever." And, therefore, they not only believed his word, but they believed in him as "he that should come, their LORD and their GOD."

"If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."

The purchase of mercy for a ruined world, and the proper propitiation for the sin which produced and continued that ruin, can be declared only by Him who is the fountain of mercy, and to whom the atonement was to be made: man has nothing to do with it but to accept or refuse it; and we

may assume, without danger of contradiction, that had heaven been silent on its high and holy purposes towards fallen man, it never would have entered into his heart to conceive either this or any other mode of reconciliation and restoration. It is so far above and beyond the conception and reach of the "natural man," yea, it is such "foolishness" to him, even when made known, that we safely thus conclude. Yet in its great outline it is written in the heart of every living, thinking being, and we can trace its presence through the long hidden, and unconnected islands of the great deep, through the leading features of Heathen superstition, through the sacrifices and expiations of the Jews, to the fulfilment of what these all shadowed out in "the offering up of the body of CHRIST once for all."

It is on this universal testimony, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission," confirmed by the express declaration of GOD's revealed will, that we are called on and commanded to believe in CHRIST. As he was the true sin-offering, of which all other sacrifices, Patriarchal, Pagan, or Jewish, were but types; as his blood alone taketh away the sin of the world by washing out the guilt of rebellion against GOD; so hath it pleased the Almighty Father to appoint, that no otherwise than by faith in his only begotten Son can sinful man look up to him with hope; that no otherwise than through faith in the merits of his blood shed for us to satisfy the demands of the broken law, can either original or actual guilt be atoned for, and the sinner stand justified or accounted righteous in the sight of a holy GOD. And that no otherwise than by the power and grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, can sinful creatures be renewed in the spirit of their minds to that holiness without which no man shall see the LORD. Hence it is that faith in CHRIST is so often put for the whole of religion, that we are told that "without faith it is impossible to please GOD," that "he that believeth not is condemned already." For, until we believe the message of mercy revealed by and through JESUS CHRIST in the gospel, the wit of man cannot invent a ground of hope or confidence towards GOD, for that creature who is opposed to him in all his thoughts and in all his ways. But in believing, all things

are made possible; GOD can be just and the justifier of him that believeth in JESUS; the world, sin, death, and hell, can be overcome by faith in the only begotten Son of GOD, and heaven with all its glories realized to him who walks by faith and not by sight; while to the unbeliever there is nothing possible, because there is no motive, neither is there any help promised or given. He may, indeed, and most generally he does, to tranquilize the indwelling fears of his misgiving conscience, patch up some motley system of belief for himself, in which he fashions a GOD after his own liking, and draws largely on revelation for the mercy it holds out, without once thinking, that the Scripture cannot be broken—that revelation is a whole, and must be taken altogether or not at all; that we can know nothing of GOD, as a GOD of mercy, but by the revelation of CHRIST and his cross; and that taking a part of what is revealed, will only condemn him, by proving that he had the whole, and thence makes GOD a liar, by discrediting the testimony he hath therein given to his only begotten Son.

"If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."

This is the issue which the gospel is furnished to make up with us all, my friends. If we are not sinners, we need neither its mercy, its atonement, or its grace, and the Bible is a libel on human nature; but if we are sinners, in the true meaning of the word, that is, aliens from GOD by virtue of a most just sentence already pronounced, enemies to his purity and holiness in our desires and our actions, without help or means in ourselves to renew our nature and regain his favor, mercy on me! by what name shall they be called who venture upon eternity in this condition with the gospel sounding in their ears? On such an issue, of whom should we take counsel, my hearers? The sure word of GOD, and its counterpart in our own hearts, or the vain inventions and shallow reasonings of men like ourselves? Have we not within us, yea, even those who dispute against it, have we not the witness that we cannot answer even one of a thousand of the fair and just claims of Him who made and redeemed us, upon the love and obedience of his creatures; have we not without us the speaking witness of our ruin, in the frame of both the natural and moral world, disordered, disjointed, and out of

course; storms and tempests, earthquakes and volcanoes, wars and pestilence, poverty and nakedness, cold and hunger, marring the beauty and breaking in upon the arrangement of the natural world, and darkness and ignorance, sorrow and suffering, disease and death, lording it over the image of God, and over the unconscious creatures he hath made? And did he make them to this end, brethren? Is either natural or moral evil the creature of a perfectly pure, wise, and omnipotent Being? No, my friends, God forbid you should think it; what came from his creating hands came forth "very good." But sin entered and the curse followed, which for our sakes extended even to things which cannot sin; "Cursed is the ground for thy sake." Sad proof of the hatred and abhorrence with which God regards sin, and speaking argument to us to escape from its snare.

O my dear hearers, let us listen to the faithful counsel of our heavenly Father, confirmed as it is by all that we see around us, and by all that we feel within us—above all, let us look to the convincing demonstration of his hatred of sin and love to poor sinners, manifested in "laying upon his beloved Son the iniquity of us all," and exacting from him the penalty which all creation could not pay. Look to that compassionate Saviour who gave himself for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; who took upon him our nature, that he might teach us, die for us, and save us, and rose again from the dead that we might have a hope beyond the grave.

Hear him, this day, calling upon you—"Come unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved." Hear him reproaching you—"you will not come unto me that ye might have life;" and hear all his invitations and reproofs echoed back upon your souls in the solemn warning—"If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."

But what is it to die in our sins? It is to enter upon an eternal existence with the curse of God upon our souls, to pass the intermediate state in a "certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall consume the adversary." It is to rise to the judgment of the great day, with the claims of the law in full force against us for every violation of its holy and unchangeable precepts, without a

shield from its justice, a refuge from its vengeance, or a plea for mercy; to appear before the judgment seat of CHRIST with warnings slighted, opportunities neglected, mercies abused, and love, bleeding love, despised. It is to be banished for ever from the presence of the LORD, and the glory of his power, to dwell with unceasing regret, unmixed despair, and everlasting burnings.

O, my poor fellow sinners, be persuaded to think of these things now, as you will surely think of them then. For, if but to hear of them from the lips of a minister of CHRIST, and a poor dying creature like yourselves, makes your heart to sink within you, what will it be when you hear them from the lips of the LORD JESUS himself, when the thunder of heaven proclaims the irreversible sentence, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Oh! the horror of that moment, when unbelief stands aghast at the sound of the last trumpet—when the earth, heaving into life, gives up its buried millions to judgment—when a burning world and a blazing heaven proclaim the pollution of sin by passing through the purification of fire for having witnessed it—when the gospel sinner sees the Judge of quick and dead appear in his glory, with the powers of heaven in his train and the marks of the cross in his person—when hope dies for ever and the second death seizes upon those who, in their day of grace, might have come, but they would not. And shall we risk it, my friends, against truth, against reason, against conscience, against interest, against demonstration—shall we risk it upon the weak and beggarly elements of a reason that would be wiser than GOD—upon the authority of men like ourselves, who cannot give to GOD a ransom for their own souls nor redeem their brother from the grave? GOD forbid! To whom, then, can we go but to Him who has the words of eternal life, who calls upon you to make your peace with GOD by hearty repentance and true faith, and this day sets before you the unchangeable condition of gospel hope and gospel mercy in the words of my text—"For if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."

SERMON XIX.

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY BROUGHT TO LIGHT BY THE GOSPEL.

2 Timothy i. 10.

Who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.

The particular exhortations to Timothy to be earnest, steadfast, and constant, in the profession and practice of religion, and in the performance of his duty as a minister of Christ and ruler in the Church, are grounded on the facts declared in my text; and as those facts have a proportional bearing upon every man who hears them proclaimed, their application is universal. As death and judgment await as well private Christians as public teachers of religion, as well those who make no profession of and have no concern with religion as those who do and are openly engaged on the Lord's side, all, without exception, are concerned to consider and lay to heart the infinite consequences which follow from the discoveries made to us of another state of being.

Mankind, indeed, are universally under the impression that there is a life after this present one, and they are also aware in some good degree, that its chief purpose will be to reward the good and punish the wicked; but it is only by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, which we this day celebrate, that the full and explicit knowledge of the nature and extent of that life, and of the manner in which it will affect us, is confirmed to our faith. Hence the doctrine of a future state is not only the comprehensive and conclusive argument which the apostle makes use of to enforce upon Timothy the private and public observance of his own particular duties, but that also, which applies to every other individual in the world, according to the measure which it has pleased God to deal out to him. In this respect God hath no where left himself without witness; for the conclusions reason is able to come to from the impression of a fu-

ture state, are all in favor of that fear and reverence of Almighty God which leads to obedience of his holy law, whether that be the law written on the heart, or the law of love and life proclaimed in the gospel.

To consider seriously, then, the doctrine declared in my text, is to open the door for the claims of religion to engage our attention. For religion is just what God, in his wisdom, has been pleased to appoint, to prepare us for a happy eternity—is just what is requisite to assimilate us otherwise sinful creatures to his pure and holy nature, that we may be capable of enjoying the glory and blessedness of his presence, and, in a state of endless being, reap those rich rewards which his loving mercy hath prepared and promised to all who believe and obey him. While to banish from our minds this awakening subject, to occupy our thoughts with present and sensible things, is to exclude all entrance to the fear of God in our hearts, all reverence for him in our lives. For, to the man who never realizes another life, religion, or what is the same thing, the love and service of God, can present no obligations. In fact, there might as well be no God.

When this universal impression of a future being is confirmed by express revelation; when the otherwise dark and dubious conjectures of our anxious minds are put to rest and cleared up by the explicit confirmation of the gospel; and when, what all must wish for, but none could attain unto, has, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, become the birthright and inheritance, as it were, of Christian lands, it must be profitable both to those who receive and those who reject the light, to examine and consider what Christianity teaches concerning a life to come, and then apply the instruction it shall give us—which life to come "is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death; and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel."

I. First, if there is another life after this, our present life must form a part of it, or be in some way connected with it.

We are, accordingly, informed and assured in the Scriptures, that our present life is a state of reprieve and probation—that it flows from God's free mercy, by the mediation of Jesus Christ—that it is intended to ascertain who are fit objects of God's further mercy in everlasting salvation, upon

the gracious conditions of the new covenant, or fit only for the everlasting exercise of his wrath, as irreclaimable, impenitent, unbelieving, and disobedient. The purpose of the present life, then, is to prepare ourselves, by victory over sin and the attainment of holiness, for another which is to follow it; and the duties which religion requires, and the grace or assistance afforded, are in order to enable us to attain this end; while the judgment we have to meet is to ascertain who have and who have not made this wise improvement of God's sparing mercy.

Hence, we learn that every part of our present behaviour will be strictly and impartially inquired into, and our thoughts as well as our actions laid open before the Searcher of hearts, "who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life; but to them who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; but glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, without respect of persons."

This is the great and fundamental discovery of the gospel on the condition of our future life—that the righteous shall be rewarded and the wicked punished everlastingly, is the express declaration of God's word, repeated in more instances than I have time to quote, and varied under every mode of expression which can engage attention, excite hope, or alarm fear. And this, perhaps, to the further purpose of counteracting the fatal propensity so frequent in the Christian world, of a careless, unfounded trust for salvation in that love and mercy of God which shines so bright in the gift of Jesus Christ, without once reflecting, that this and every other instance of God's goodness is intended to lead us to repentance, to faith, to holiness, and unless it produces this effect, will only the more deeply condemn us—without once considering, that mercy, however large and free, if unsought, unfound, here, cannot be obtained hereafter, and that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

We may certainly collect, then, from the Scripture account of our future life, that it will be a state in which men will

reap the fruit of their doings in the present life—in which the reward of their hands shall be given them—in which "he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the SPIRIT shall of the SPIRIT reap life everlasting."

II. Secondly, if there is another life in connexion with this, the means of attaining it must be within our reach.

To keep the word of promise to the ear, and break it to the hope, is truly the character of the "father of lies," not of the "Father of mercies and GOD of all comfort and consolation." And as GOD in his mercy hath seen fit to reprieve sinners from eternal death, and to put them once more on trial for eternal life, he who doeth all things well must have furnished them to profit by this wonderful display of his wisdom and love; and we are bound to believe, whatever specious objections may be brought against the doctrine, that every human being under the sound of the gospel, to go no farther, though I am willing to include the race of Adam, is provided, by the undertaking of JESUS CHRIST, to escape that eternal death from which he is reprieved, to overcome that sin which entailed it upon him, to attain that holiness required by the gospel, and, as its reward, that eternal life which is yet the free gift of GOD through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. With this view of the subject agrees the whole tenor of revelation. "GOD was in CHRIST reconciling the world to himself." "For GOD sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." "GOD made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of GOD in him." "GOD so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Accordingly, of JESUS CHRIST and his undertaking for us, we are taught to believe that he tasted death for every man; that he gave himself a ransom for all; that the atonement of his death is as extensive as human sin; that he is the propitiaton for the sins of the whole world; that because he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, therefore GOD also hath highly exalted him, that he might be head over all things to his Church, in which he rules as a Son in his own house; that when he ascended up

on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men, even the Holy Spirit, to abide continually with his Church, to convince, convert, and save; that, having overcome death and him that had power of it, and having all things committed unto him of the Father, he proclaims to a lost world, "Come unto me all the ends of the earth, and be saved." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." "He that believeth on me hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Of the Holy Spirit we are taught to believe, that by his operations upon our hearts, we are enlightened and quickened from a state of spiritual death to one of life and knowledge; that by his convincing power we are brought to a right sense of the heinous nature of sin, and enabled to resolve against it; that by his sanctifying grace we are renewed in the spirit of our minds to love God and to serve him in holiness, to believe his word, to trust his promise, and to embrace the offer of his mercy in and through Jesus Christ as our only hope of eternal life; that in the great work of our salvation, from first to last, it is by the Holy Ghost that God works in us to will and to do; and that as it is by him only that we are prepared for glory, so by him are we raised from the dead to partake of it. Such is the wonderful provision of the love of God in Christ Jesus, to bring back a world of fallen, sinful creatures to himself; and by the gospel the gracious invitation is given to all, the means are offered to all, and it is proclaimed even to the chief of sinners—"ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." And it is surely a much more reasonable as well as scriptural method of accounting for the disregard manifested for the gospel, to ascribe it to the perverseness of human nature, to the power of the god of this world in blinding the minds of them that will not believe, to the love of sin, or to any cause rather than to some secret reserve on the part of Almighty God, at war with the plain declarations of his public message by his only begotten Son, however right and just such a proceeding may be shown in the abstract to be, and most consistent, in the view of man's wisdom, with the claims of his unlimited sovereignty. No, my fellow sinners, there

is no bar to the mercy of the gospel but yourselves—"the Spirit and the bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him come, and take of the water of life freely." If you are not athirst for the water of life, it is because you have turned a deaf ear to the warning of God's word, to the testimony therein given to your lost condition; it is because you stifle the convictions of your conscience, awakened by the Holy Spirit, and drive him from you; it is because you love the pleasures of sin and the vanities of the world more than your immortal souls; it is because you will not believe even one who has arisen from the dead, to reveal to you the unspeakable interests which await you beyond the grave, and are dependent for their everlasting happiness or misery on the present short, fleeting, and uncertain state of being; it is because you receive not the truth in the love of it that you might be saved; it is because you will not come to the light, lest your deeds should be reproved; and not because God either withholds his grace or restrains you from profiting by it. No, he this day calls upon you to repent and believe the gospel; he offers you the sacrifice of his only Son to atone for your sins, the grace of his Holy Spirit to renew your hearts, the comfort of his precious promises to strengthen your weak endeavors, the terrors of his avenging wrath to alarm your guilty fears, a judgment revealed to determine your everlasting condition, and eternity awaiting you to crown with its endless sanctions the part you shall now take. O that his light may this day dawn upon your souls with life and power, that you may be no longer faithless but believing, and enabled to choose that good part which shall not be taken from you. For your eternal interest is now depending, and depending upon yourselves. The terms of the gospel, life and death, are set before you. Your condition in the future world will be determined by your behaviour in this. Eternal life, through the free and undeserved gift of God through Jesus Christ, can no otherwise be obtained by us than by our own most earnest and unremitting endeavors to become worthy of it, by that personal holiness which is the crown of religion; for he that will be saved, must work out his own salvation

in the fear of God, and as God has appointed, now while it is called to-day.

In what is thus revealed to us in the word of God, of a future state, and of the means provided for our attainment of its blessedness, we find the whole adapted to our weak and infirm condition, my hearers, yet so adapted as to give no encouragement to sin, no excuse to indolence and carelessness, no hope to the fearful and unbelieving, which is a strong and convincing argument that it is not of man, neither by man, but the wisdom, and the power, and the love of God, manifested to advance his glory in the salvation of souls. And a strong and instant appeal it is to all who hear the joyful sound of the gospel, not to trifle with their day of grace, not to put away from them the warnings of God's word, the convictions of his Holy Spirit, the reason of their own minds, and the unspeakable interests of eternity.

In what pertains to the judgment through which we must all pass to the rewards or punishments of a future state, the same merciful regard to our circumstances is manifested by our heavenly Father. For we are informed,

III. Thirdly, that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead, so that the same person will pass sentence on our sins who suffered and died for them.

In the consideration of what belongs to this point of doctrine, it is hardly possible to determine whether there is in it more of hope for the penitent believer or of despair to the impenitent sinner.

Compassed about as we are with infirmity, my brethren, and deeply sensible how far short we come of what our Lawgiver and Judge might righteously demand at our hands, it is a never to be forgotten, and an ever to be praised, proof of God's clemency and goodness towards us, that one who was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin, who in the very truth of our nature experienced its weakness, though he rose superior to its frailty, and therefore knows how to have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way, that one who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, should, in the last resort, be constituted our Judge.

To the believer it is full of hope and comfort that he has

not to meet a stranger in that trying day, one to whom he is wholly unknown, but one to whose mediation and intercession he has often had recourse, of whose fulness, all spiritual grace and advancement has been wrought in him, in whose righteousness alone he trusts, in whose all-atoning blood he has washed and purified the polluted robes of his own righteousness, and in whose promise he confides for eternal life; while to the impenitent sinner, all that JESUS is to the believer, is a source of the blackest despair. That unbelief which he cherished against the convictions of his conscience, is now put to flight, by seeing eye to eye, and face to face. That JESUS, whom he derided as an impostor, or acknowledged only as a man, now appears before him with life and death eternal dependent on his almighty decision. The judgment is set and the books are opened, and the great white throne presents to an admiring universe that same JESUS of Nazareth who bore his cross through Jerusalem to Calvary, who bore our sins in his own body on the tree, who tasted death for a lost world, and rising triumphant from the grave, became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him, exalted as Judge of quick and dead. All this the impenitent gospel sinner then sees, in that flood of uncreated light which surrounds the throne of the Eternal. All this the gospel sinner hears in the thunderings, and lightnings, and voices which proceed from the throne itself. While memory rolls back upon his awakened conscience invitations slighted, warnings neglected, mercies abused, and time wasted—heaven defied, hell derided, and judgment dared. That world which he took for his portion now rolls a smoking ruin under his feet. The golden god of his idolatry is reduced to a cinder. The pleasures he pursued have left only their sting behind them. The morality in which he trusted, touched by the sceptre of eternal truth, evaporates into selfishness, while naked and defenceless he trembles before his righteous Judge. In horror and amazement, a plea for mercy would rush to his lips; but the day of mercy is past—it is the day of judgment! his own mouth anticipates the sentence of the Judge, and he sinks into that bottomless gulf, "where the worm never dies, and the fire never shall be quenched."

O blessed LORD, thou most worthy Judge eternal, look

down upon us in thy mercy, and give to the truth of thy holy and unchangeable word its life and power. Fasten an arrow of conviction in the heart of some poor sinner present; yea, LORD, of all who are present, that they may flee from the wrath to come, and escape the terrors of thy great and dreadful day, the horrors of everlasting despair, and the death that never dies.

O my dear brethren, let us keep ever before us this awful close of all our hopes and fears, that it may stir us up so to pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal;—that, holding faith and a good conscience, we may reap a full reward. In that awful day, what will the world and its vanities be worth? What advantage will the pursuits of ambition, profit, and pleasure then yield us? Where will be the gain of riches if we are not rich towards GOD, rich in faith, rich in good works? Bring your worldly condition to this blessed light, my brethren, and whatever in it will not bear this test, cease from it, and put it away from you. For it is better to enter into life naked of every worldly accommodation, than, clothed in purple and fine linen, to awake in hell, being in torments.

I come, in the last place, to make a brief application of the instruction we may draw from the text, and from what has been said upon it.

Have we, then, my friends, realized and brought near to us this final close of all that we are engaged so busily and earnestly about? Have we ever paused upon the awakening thought that death and judgment await us, and that we are advancing towards them as fast as the tide of time can roll us onward to the fated moment, when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up? Or have we permitted it to pass through the mind as a speculation of something distant and future, which might be put off to a more convenient season? Alas! how many thousands who yet cannot plead ignorance, are nevertheless as every way unconcerned about this event as if they had no interest whatever in the mighty determination then to be made. How many millions in gospel lands have yet to awake to the solemn truth contained in my text, to shake off the thorns and briers of worldly occupation, and

give some share of thought and attention to the interests of eternity. And even in this little assembly, where not a week passes without its honest warning, what a small proportion have brought the truths of religion to bear upon the deep anxieties of a dying bed, upon the account which each must give of himself to GOD. Alas! how is it in these days, as it was in the days of Noah and of Lot. One goes to his farm, another to his merchandise, and a third to his profession or his pleasure, regardless of the certain truth, "that the day of the LORD so cometh as a thief in the night," and of the only preparation which can enable a fallen, sinful creature to meet it with composure.

But, my hearers, if these things are so, "what manner of persons ought we to be" who profess to believe them, and whether we believe them or not, must, nevertheless, meet them, with this miserable addition to our guilt, that we had timely warning and effectual means to escape the snare?

If a day is fixed and drawing nearer and nearer, when CHRIST will come to take account of his servants, how earnestly engaged should we be, "that we may be found of him in peace." Is it the part of prudence to be careless about so great an event? or can any sacrifice be too great to secure a "well done" from our heavenly Master? Reason says no, revelation says no, heaven says no, hell says no. Will any here present, then, say yes? No, not one will speak out; and yet in one little hour how many will declare by their actions, which speak louder than words, that they have no relish for heavenly things—that they prefer the pleasures of sin, the gain of ungodliness, and a portion in this life with the awful curse which follows them in the life to come, to the incorruptible inheritance of a heavenly kingdom—to that fulness of joy which beams from the presence of GOD—to those endless pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore.

O that I could persuade you to give as much thought to your souls as you do to your sins; to bestow as much labor on your eternal, as you waste upon your temporal interests—as much attention to be adorned with righteousness in your lives, as with finery on your persons. Then there might be some hope; but, alas! alas! while the present life swallows up the care and attention due to another, what else can be ex-

pected but that iniquity should abound, the love of many wax cold, and the leaden slumber of infidelity settle into that deep and death-like sleep, from which the voice of the archangel and the trump of GOD alone shall wake them.

"Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST shall give thee light." There is yet one little precious hour in which to redeem the time that is wasted—in which, by repentance towards GOD and faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, thy ingratitude may be forgotten, thy sins blotted out, and the renewal of the HOLY GHOST prepare thee to reap the rich reward of everlasting life and blessedness in the kingdom of CHRIST and of GOD.

To the Christian, in like manner, the doctrine of a future state is full of warning and encouragement at the same time. It warns him that this world is not his rest, and thereby enables him to resist and to overcome the temptation of its prosperity. It sets before him a kingdom which cannot be moved, and thereby engages him to seek the best things, to lay up his treasure where neither disappointment, or loss, or decay, can ever come. In the hour of adversity, the contemplation of an incorruptible inheritance laid up in heaven for him, encourages him to wait with faith and patience, and to endure as seeing Him who is invisible except to the eye of faith. And even in the hour of dissolution, the assurance of a joyful resurrection through the merits of a risen Redeemer, cheers the dark valley of the shadow of death with light from heaven, and transmits him through the darkness of the grave to the uncreated light of GOD's everlasting presence. His faith is built on the resurrection of JESUS, his hope is founded on the promise of his LORD. "Because I live, ye shall live also." "I will come again and receive you to myself." This is the anchor of his soul to the Christian, the joyful expectation of which supports him through his pilgrimage, and strengthens him to purify and prepare himself for the "well done" of his Saviour and his Judge. It is the resurrection of CHRIST, my brethren, which gives life and power to his gospel. We may admire the holiness of his life—we may mourn over the tragedy of his death—it is his resurrection from the dead which makes the gospel a joyful sound. Take it away, or, what is the same in effect, let it be disregarded,

unapplied, and of what worth is the gospel? Take it away, and to what purpose should we celebrate his death as the highest solemnity of religion, or expect to derive comfort or increase of grace from a Saviour who himself continued the victim of death, and imprisoned in the grave? "But now is CHRIST risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept," therefore, we draw near to GOD with confidence through him who is thus "the first born of many brethren." His death for us is sanctified as a means of grace by the triumph of his resurrection. The promises of GOD to a sinful world are sealed to every believer in this proof that the great sin offering is accepted, and assurance given to all men that they shall stand before him as their Judge.

Let us, therefore, my brethren, as partakers of this hope, keep ever before us the gracious purpose of his life, his death, and his resurrection, that, as he came to redeem us from all iniquity, we may purify our hearts even as he is pure; and drawing near to this commemoration of his passion and death for our sins, with a true and lively faith, we may realize the power of his resurrection, through the renewal of our spiritual strength, and pass at last to our joyful resurrection, through his SPIRIT dwelling in us, who "hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel."

To whom, with the Father and the HOLY GHOST, be all honor and glory, world without end.

SERMON XX.

SALVATION THROUGH GRACE.—SACRAMENTAL.

1 John iv. 10.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

The mercies of God to his creatures present the most moving appeal which can be made to their hearts; they speak a language which all can understand, however slow of heart to practise the lesson they teach. And as they are universal in their distribution, and are over all his works, they form the ground-work of that condemnation or acquittal, that reward or punishment, which his righteous judgment shall determine upon them. This is presented to us in many shapes in the Scriptures of our faith, my brethren, and many most affectionate exhortations, drawn from this source, are set forth to quicken our languid tempers, and stir up the best affections of our souls to love and honor, to serve and please our unwearied Benefactor. "God is love," and all that we can know and perceive, all that we enjoy or suffer, whatever we possess in time or can hope for in eternity, is grounded on this never to be shaken foundation.

His sovereign power, indeed, claims of right, our entire duty and obedience, our most unreserved submission to his holy will, and the most unqualified disposal of our destiny; nor is it in man, or in any created being, to measure arms with Jehovah. But though this is imprinted on our hearts, and set forth in his word, as the unanswerable argument for rational creatures to learn the will of God, and to do it, yet in the benignity of his pure and perfect nature, he rather applies to a sense of benefits conferred, of compassion entertained, of favor and mercy promised, to move our gratitude and win our willing obedience.

Of this I might cite many passages and proofs from the Scriptures, for it is but to open the Bible to find them. Yet have we a larger volume, my hearers, in which to read this

quickening truth. We have only to open our eyes, and lo, the goodness of GOD surrounds us on every side! We have but to look back on our past lives, and to see and to realize, each one for himself, the long-suffering patience and forbearance of our heavenly Father, who is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," and that whatever is adverse and unprosperous in our present circumstances, is the fruit of our own headstrong passions, or perverse neglect of his word and warning; and we have only to consider the purpose and appointment of this day to be assured of the soul comforting truth, that that GOD "who so loved the world that he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, will with him also freely give us all things." These speaking proofs of GOD's love to a world of sinners, as they are obvious to all, so do they speak to all, of those grateful, thankful, and hearty returns of love and obedience, which is the poor but only acknowledgment we can pay for such unequalled goodness, which all true Christians feel and render, and which the apostle from whom my text is taken pressed upon his hearers, with all the persuasiveness of a heart which spake out of the abundance wherewith it was filled.

But, my brethren, while the tender mercies of our GOD are thus strong and imperative in the claim they have upon us, there is one circumstance attending this display of his love and compassion, which should give a still deeper sense of it to our souls. And that is, that it was and is wholly undeserved—what we had no right to expect, neither could put in any claim for. This it is which gives its point to the text, and sets forth "the kindness of GOD our Saviour toward man" in all the "breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of his" rich, redeeming "love." This it is which St. John presses upon Christians, as the conclusive argument for that spirit of love and fellowship among themselves, which is the new commandment in the religion of the gospel, and the proof, that as disciples of CHRIST we have passed from death unto life. "Herein is love," says he, "not that we loved GOD, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

In directing your meditations to this passage of Scripture, my brethren, I shall confine your attention to two heads of doctrine, obviously to be drawn from it.

The one, that our salvation, with all that leads to it, is of mere grace, unsought and unprocurable by us.

The other, that this salvation, thus wrought out and offered to sinners by the gospel, is no otherwise attainable than in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

These two points will naturally lead to such practical reflections as will put you in possession, I trust, of the spirit of the text, and prepare you with devout and understanding hearts to entertain the meditations of the season, and, while you hail the advent of the Saviour with joyful hearts, pass forward in spirit to the concluding proof of that love which overcame death with his own weapons, and opened the gate of everlasting life to redeemed man; while they may be made effectual by God's good blessing to awaken consideration in those who, surrounded by the love of God in the mercies of the gospel, feel neither the benefits they slight, nor the ingratitude they are guilty of.

I. First, that our salvation, with all that leads to it, is of mere grace, unsought and unprocurable by us.

As pride in some of its detestable workings was the cause of that transgression which separated man from his Maker, and overspread this poor world with sin in all its varied but destructive shapes; so it is to this day the root of all opposition to and disregard of the salvation of the gospel. As it was the ground work on which the devil contrived that temptation which ended in the ruin of our first parents, so it is the great instrument by which he takes captive and holds in his snare the tens of thousands who, in spite of warning and conviction, continue the servants of sin. Hence that swelling and rising of the carnal mind against this fundamental doctrine of salvation by grace, and the strong propensity, even in awakened man, to be his own saviour, either in whole or in part, and by his own merits to make out a title to the reward of eternal life. But assuredly pride was not made for man, either in his upright or in his fallen condition; as a creature, a created being, he had nothing which he had not received, nor could he rightfully withhold the inward affections of his soul or the outward service of his body from the grand purpose of his creation. He ventured, however, in an evil hour, to listen to the whispers of pride, to think himself

or his adviser wiser than God, and, in the ambitious desire to know more and to stand higher than belonged to his station, he stepped upon forbidden ground and sunk into irretrievable ruin. Entertaining in his heart another image, another desire than of God himself, the original likeness in which he was made departed, and left him the helpless victim of sin, spiritually dead and eternally condemned. This is no ideal picture, my friends, but the simple truth of man's condition from God's true and faithful word.

In this state, what was left to the fallen creature wherewith to undo his sin and restore his hope? Could his betrayer furnish him to regain the height from whence he was precipitated? Alas! he himself had fallen from a still higher elevation. Pride had destroyed the glory even of the angelic nature, and sunk a seraph to the bottomless pit of eternal despair. Was there aught within reach of the sinner himself to atone for his guilt, to make satisfaction for his offence? Could ages of suffering on the part of the offender compensate for his crime? Alas! the offence was infinite, the offender a finite dying creature, every way betrayed and undone, without help, and devoid even of hope. Whence came his deliverance? Blessed be the Father of mercies, that we are able to answer this question, to trace to its source both our ruin and recovery, and in the truth of his holy word, in the help of his renewing grace, to know whence our salvation cometh; to know that when there was no eye to pity, no hand to save, his own right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory, and wrought out salvation for us; that to the antecedent original love and compassion of God the Father Almighty, we owe the whole work of our redemption. This the Scriptures set forth to us in a great number of places and in much variety of expression, and our Lord himself uniformly teaches this doctrine—"I came not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me:" "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And the gospel itself, as containing the glad tidings of salvation, is styled the gospel of the grace of God. Indeed, no doctrine is more clearly taught throughout both the gospels and epistles than this, that to the original goodness and mercy of God

the Father, we owe both the appointment and acceptance of the sacrifice of CHRIST's death as an atonement for the sins of the whole world. "GOD commendeth his love towards us," saith St. Paul, "in that while we were yet sinners CHRIST died for us;" and the same apostle sums up the whole in one short sentence—"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of GOD is eternal life through JESUS CHRIST our LORD."

If saved at all, then, my friends—that is, if provision is made for our deliverance from the curse entailed upon sin, and means appointed to restore the image of GOD in our souls, and bring us back to that glorious and happy state from whence we are fallen and far distant—it must be altogether of mere grace on the part of GOD, nothing moving him thereto but the original inherent compassion of his nature, and pity for the work of his hands, betrayed and ruined by the malice of the devil. "Herein is love," my brethren, even the love of GOD; and let us keep it steadily in view, ascribing to the glorious Trinity, in our salvation, what is due to each and to all; for it is an unworthy and improper notion of Almighty GOD, to conceive of him as so implacable and severe that he was only prevailed on by the interposition of CHRIST to have mercy on fallen man, as a passionate man is sometimes made to yield by the entreaties of his friend. It is the undoubted doctrine of the Scriptures, that while, as the righteous governor of the universe, he was bound to punish sin, yet as "the LORD GOD, merciful and gracious," he contrived, appointed, and accepted those wonderful means, by which, while sin should not go unpunished, a door of mercy and hope was opened to the sinner. "Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of GOD, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out."

But our salvation, my brethren, is shown to be yet more strictly of mere grace, inasmuch as it was unsought and unprocurable by any means in our reach.

Here, my friends, we have an opportunity of viewing sin in all its malignity, not only in exposing us to the loss of GOD's favor and the terrors of his wrath, but in hardening the heart against them, and deadening the spiritual sense to the desire to be delivered from them. The sinner never prays. Of this we have a memorable instance in the first transgressors; no

symptom of contrition, no sorrow of heart for the offence they have committed against their Maker and Benefactor, is manifested by either of them; they knew and felt that they were guilty, and their guilt led them to hide themselves from Him whose voice had heretofore been music to their ears; no supplication for mercy, no prayer for pardon, no entreaty for a mitigation of their sentence, is heard from them, any more than from their betrayer; nothing is seen in them but the hard and sullen temper which disdains acknowledgment and resents reproof. Oh! how near to the state and temper of devils does sin reduce its votaries; yet, at this very moment, did the infinite compassion of GOD meet them with the mercies of redemption, unsought, unprocurable. Freely, and of his unbounded goodness and love, did "the Father of mercies, the GOD of all comfort and consolation," while denouncing the curse under which we all labor, present his only and well beloved Son, to shield them and us their progeny from the demands of the law, broken and dishonored by their sin, and in due time to become that "seed of the woman" which should "bruise the head of the serpent;" and freely did the love of CHRIST move him to undertake the mighty ransom of them, and of the countless millions which fell in them.

Thus is our salvation, from first to last, my brethren, of the mere grace and unsought favor of a merciful GOD. "Herein is love," dear brethren, "not that we loved GOD, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." O that the hard hearts of the impenitent and ungodly may melt and soften under this wonderful display of GOD's hatred of their sins and love for their souls. O that the proud and lofty despisers of the cross of CHRIST, may in this see on what a sandy foundation their self-righteous hopes are built, and, renouncing their own righteousness, submit themselves to "the righteousness of GOD, which is by faith of JESUS CHRIST, whom GOD hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, that he might be just and the justifier of all that believe in this Redeemer."

II. For the salvation thus wrought out and offered to sinners by the gospel, is no otherwise attainable than through the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

This is evident, not only from the express declarations of Scripture, but from the nature of the thing itself.

The whole of our salvation being founded on the gratuitous appointment of Almighty God, the means to be used by us in the attainment of it must be ordered and directed by the same all-wise and gracious Being. Inventions and contrivances of men can have no place in this great work, and can only tend to defeat its efficacy on those who in this manner add to or take away from the "more sure word of prophecy." The object in view being two-fold, not merely the deliverance of the sinner from punishment by the substitution of an atonement sufficient for the expiation of his guilt, but, furthermore, the renewal and sanctification of his corrupt and sinful nature, without which there can be no salvation, it must follow that He who made us, who saw the full extent of our undoing, and knew the fittest means to counteract the apostacy of accountable creatures, alone could judge and appoint what was most effectual to this end, and at the same time most consonant with his own perfections.

Again, as God was the party offended by human sin, it rested solely with himself whether to accept any, or what kind of atonement for it, as also what application to make of the altered condition of his creature. It was not for the sinner at the time, neither is it for him now, to say by whom or on what conditions he will be saved. His part is the deepest thankfulness for such an unspeakable gift, with the most earnest and devoted diligence to walk worthy of it. Thus we judge in things of a temporal nature, my hearers, and the same rule will equally apply to those eternal things now under consideration. But when to this reasoning we add the clear and unequivocal declarations of God's revealed word, as respects both our ruin and our remedy, there can be no refuge but in unbelief. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." "There is none righteous, no not one." "Cursed is every one that continueth not, in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin—so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." "Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "For

what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." "For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "For we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man." "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, only the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." Many more passages of Scripture of a similar import might be brought forward, my brethren and hearers, but these I think quite sufficient, because whoever can withstand them would just as readily resist the whole artillery of the word of God. Thus is it shown you, my friends, that our whole salvation is of the mere grace of Almighty God, undeserved, unsought, and unprocurable by us, and that no otherwise is it attainable by us than through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many and various are the reflections, my brethren, which rise in the mind on a near view like this of the state and condition of accountable creatures, whom a few short years, perhaps days, perhaps hours—who can tell?—must consign to all the realities of an eternal world, to the righteous judgment of God, to heaven or to hell. There is something deeply affecting in such a thought, and the more so, when it applies to relations and friends, to neighbors and acquaintances, persons whom we know, for whom we entertain a regard, but of whom we are obliged to know that religious considerations form none, or but a very small part in their estimate of happiness. Can it be because they do not believe there is such a thing as a future state? This is next to impossible; and if you ask them they will tell you they have no doubt of it. Is it because they reject the revelation God hath made to us? They say no—both by speech and otherwise, for not one of them but what hopes for the mercy of God upon his soul; and

otherwise than by revelation we can none of us know any thing of mercy with GOD. To what, then, must we attribute this almost universal disregard of the things that are most surely believed among us? Alas! my brethren, to what but that love of sin, in some of its deceitful shapes, which is stronger than all those cords of love wherewith GOD daily and hourly draws them to himself—more powerful than the compassionate intreaties of CHRIST, the lively admonitions of the HOLY GHOST, the reason and conviction of their own minds—yea, more alluring than the joys of heaven, and hardly restrained by the torments of hell. This is the cause why such multitudes of old and young, of high and low, of rich and poor, of bond and free, even with the gospel of salvation in their hands, prefer a portion in this life, and live without GOD in the world. The aged, too often, it is to be feared, have trifled with their day of grace until it has passed away from them, never to return. In the middle stage of life, when all the faculties are in perfection, and accountability at its height, when experience might teach some wisdom, yet then it is that the GOD of this world is most devoutly worshipped. One goes to his farm and another to his merchandise, one chases ambition and another pursues pleasure, regardless of the steady though silent approach of that hour when it shall be said unto each, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, then whose shall those things be" which thou hast provided.

In early life, when this fleeting scene spreads all its enchantments, when passion warms and hope flatters, when reason yields, and prudence is yet remote, it is but an unwelcome office to hint at the then far off things of eternity; indeed it is too commonly an useless one. Yet then is the time: ere the heart is hardened, and shame deadened, and the conscience seared in the crooked and cruel paths of dissipated, sinful pleasure. O for a warning voice to reach the hearts of the thousands of young and comparatively innocent creatures who are now on the turning point of life and death eternal. O for a warning voice to reach the hearts of fathers and mothers, Christians as well as others, in behalf of the rising generation. But, alas! so many fathers and mothers look only at this world, that they encourage what they ought

to check, and vitiate the minds while they deck the bodies of their offspring in all the meretricious ornaments of alluring fashion; so that even Christian parents are constrained to do like their neighbors, and thus "evil communications corrupt good manners." O that the young persons and their parents who are now present would let me strip the mask from this hydra of fashion and folly, that they may see the diseases and death both of body and soul that lurk beneath it—that they would let me show them the thorn beneath the rose, ere it enter into their flesh and rankle and fester into a wounded spirit—that they would let me discover the serpent beneath the flower, ere it sting them to madness. O that they would hear the voice of one who has tried it in all its depths, yea, drank it to the dregs, and only by the love of GOD in CHRIST JESUS, has been saved from total shipwreck of body and soul in hell. O if there is truth in GOD, if there is warning in his word, if there is wisdom in experience, now let it take effect, and this deadly evil be put away from us, my brethren. Say not with Lot, "Is it not a little one?" Alas! know ye not that even in this sense, "a little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation?" For the beginning of sin, as well as of strife, is like the letting out of waters, no one can say where it shall stop.

But to return. That GOD, who has no need of the sinful man—who could, with the most perfect ease, have called a new race of beings into existence, should, nevertheless, prefer that method of his mercy which revelation makes known to us, to promote his own glory and the final good of his creatures, must ever be a subject of the deepest admiration and thankfulness, and should teach us that it is not to be trifled with. We may be very sure, my hearers, that as the gift of JESUS CHRIST is the highest proof GOD could give of his love towards us, either to reject or to neglect it must be the height of contempt, ingratitude, and rebellion, and can never go unpunished. We may, and, alas! we do, too many of us, flatter ourselves, that, after all, GOD will not be so severe as to carry his threatenings into full effect; that, some how or another, the great mass of irreligious people who are not openly profligate and abandoned, will escape the damnation of hell. But what is this, my friends, but one of those many deceits

of the devil, operating upon our love of sin, with which he labors to ensnare souls? what is it but making CHRIST the minister of sin, and religion a pious fraud? But we are sure that GOD cannot and will not deceive. We are sure that there is no deception in the hatred his pure and holy nature bears towards sin in all its shapes. The miseries of the present life, the cross of CHRIST, and the pains of hell, bear witness to its malignity; and had it been possible that GOD should intend to deceive us for our good by heightening the description of its destructive nature, this might have been done without the humiliation, sufferings, and death, of his only Son. What a desperate game, then, must it be to risk our immortal souls on so flimsy a delusion! What an awful proof of the corruption of all our faculties by the poison of sin, that, against light and knowledge, against warning and conviction, unmoved by hope, unawed by fear, in defiance of GOD's threatened wrath, in despite of his offered love, in contempt of means and mercies, we continue in sin, slight the only Saviour, and will not come to him that we may have life! Oh! what a spectacle does the world called Christian present—GOD's holy word laid aside, unbelief and impiety increasing, the ordinances of religion made light of, the cross of CHRIST slighted, sin and folly triumphant, and the children of GOD to be sought for here and there, like gleaning grapes in a vineyard!

And now, my brethren and hearers, as GOD hath laid help for us upon one who is mighty and able to save, as without him we can do nothing acceptable to GOD, or available for the salvation of our souls, let us "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, CHRIST JESUS," in what he hath, by the will of GOD, done for us.

He hath removed the barrier raised by human sin betwixt GOD and our souls, and placed mankind in a new relation to their Maker, becoming a second Adam or representative of the human race. In this sense it is that "the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," and "that he, by the grace of GOD, tasted death for every man," having borne in his own body the curse of the law. To Christians, in particular, that is, to baptized believers, he hath opened a new and living way to the kingdom of heaven, through faith in his blood.

He hath fulfilled the conditions of the covenant of works for them, and procured a new and more gracious covenant, by which repentance and renewed obedience is accepted through him instead of sinless perfection. He hath fully declared and made known the will of God, for the direction of their lives, and left them the example of his own life as the explanation of it. He hath sent forth the Holy Spirit to be a perpetual guide and comfort to his Church, in working out their salvation. He hath laid down his life upon the cross for their forfeited lives, and poured out his blood as an atonement to God, for all sins repented of and forsaken. He was buried and rose again the third day, thereby giving assurance unto all men, that the sacrifice was accepted, and that they also shall rise again from the dead. He hath thus brought that life and immortality to light, through the gospel, in which every man shall be happy or miserable for ever, according to the righteous judgment of God on the deeds done in the body. And he hath ascended into heaven, where, as the head of all principality and power, he rules and governs his Church as a son in his own house, watching over his people, supplying their wants, and rendering their prayers and praises acceptable to God, through his prevailing intercessions for them.

All this he hath done for us, my hearers. This he hath done and suffered, that he might bring us to God. Of his death, as the price of all, he hath commanded us to continue a perpetual memorial, until he come again to receive us to himself. That memorial is now before you. The mighty benefits it represents, you are partakers of, through grace. Let us then draw near with true hearts, in full assurance of faith, that "if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life." And let it be ever in our hearts, dear brethren, that "herein is love" indeed, "not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

SERMON XXI.

NEGLECT OF THE GOSPEL.

HEBREWS ii. 3, 4.

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the LORD, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; GOD also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the HOLY GHOST, according to his own will?

The consideration of the question put in the text instructs us, my brethren and hearers, how very inexcusable all men are who neglect the salvation offered in the gospel, either by rejecting it through unbelief, when proposed to them, or by living unworthily of it after they have professed to embrace it. There are many considerations which greatly aggravate the fault of such persons as contemptuously neglect the proposal of a favor, which it is both their duty and their highest interest to accept; and many circumstances make them more and more inexcusable, and justly to deserve the severest punishment for their ingratitude and contempt. Now as we regulate our judgments according to this principle, in the common affairs of this life, it is but just that it should be extended to the higher and more important concerns of the life that is to come; and it is to this point, to the equity of the case, that St. Paul directs our attention. And to gain your attention, my friends, and to engage you in behalf of your best interests, to rouse you, if possible, from the heartless torpor of indifference to the mercies of redemption, and awaken you to the worth of your souls, I will endeavor to point out from the text itself, what commanding considerations are set at naught, and what clear and convincing proofs are withstood, by all who neglect the gospel.

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the LORD, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; GOD also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers

miracles and gifts of the HOLY GHOST, according to his own will?"

In these words are contained,

I. First the intrinsic goodness and excellency of the thing itself, which is rejected.

A slight acquaintance with the gospel of CHRIST is sufficient to impress upon the mind of every man some idea of its importance; and as this should naturally incline those who possess this advantage to search deeper into its high discoveries, the neglect of this duty is generally attended with a corresponding carelessness, either as to its promises or its threatenings, and a deeper engagement with present things. For it is when viewed in its whole extent, in its divine origin, its gracious purpose and effectual means—it is when considered in its application to the condition of man—that we discern what the gospel really is, and learn that it is truly a great salvation.

It is a salvation from sin and misery, from the power and tyranny of the devil, and from the punishment of eternal death. Sin, in its own nature, independent of its being an obstinate disobedience to the revealed will of GOD, is in itself every way unreasonable and inexcusable; because it is opposite to the light of reason, the dictates of natural conscience, and the agreeing opinion of all wise and good men; because it is contrary to every idea we can form of the perfections of GOD, destructive to the public welfare of mankind, to the health of our own bodies, to the peace of our own minds, and to the order, quiet, and comfort of society. The love and practice of sin is the subjecting our reason to vile affections, to inordinate and brutish appetites, to inflamed and ungoverned passions, than which there cannot be a more abject state of slavery imagined for a rational being. To speak after the manner of men, how contrary to the dignity of man to see and approve what is good, and yet not be able to prevail with ourselves to practise it; to be sensible of the destructive consequences of sin, and yet, through the strength of evil habits, to continue under the power and dominion of it; to feel ourselves deprived of our present happiness, and of our best hopes of what is to come; to travel through life loaded with and conscious of guilt, to lie down in death overwhelmed

with remorse and despair, which every impenitent sinner must do, and yet to continue to cherish such vicious dispositions and practices, as are the only causes of all this misery, is evidently the most dreadful condition that can be.

Now to have a way proposed to us, my hearers, of being delivered from this body of sin into the glorious liberty of the children of God, of breaking the chain which binds every fallen creature to this body of death—to have a method laid before us of being rescued from guilt and fear in life, from horror and despair in death, and from everlasting burnings in eternity, and to be put into a way of securing a quiet conscience, the peace of God through life, hope and composure in death, and eternal life in mansions of glory for ever and ever—this is the offer of a great salvation. And evident it must be to the equity of our own minds, that whoever shall neglect this offer is absolutely inexcusable, and justly deserves to fall into that misery from which he would not accept deliverance. Were there, indeed, any other way to accomplish this work, had we a choice in the means of deliverance from the power and the punishment of sin, the case were different; but as this is not so, as salvation is altogether of grace, as there is no other name or means under heaven given unto men whereby we must be saved, only the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and the means revealed in the gospel, the guilt and folly of neglecting it is hereby infinitely increased, because it is treating God's offered mercy and favor with contempt, and adding ingratitude to rebellion against his revealed will, and is therefore worthy of the severest punishment. For

II. Secondly, the further consideration that the gospel is an express and positive revelation of the will of God, is a very high aggravation of the sin of neglecting so great salvation.

He that, on the information of the gospel, desires not to be delivered from the dominion of sin, and acquires no thirst after a life of righteousness, for that very reason does not deserve to be saved from the punishment of sin, and is, in his very nature, unqualified for the rewards of holiness. But when to this preference of sin there is added, moreover, a direct contempt of God, the reasonableness of leaving such person to himself, and of finally punishing him for his sin, is

increased into a necessity, because God must and will maintain the honor of his supreme dominion, and vindicate upon all such despisers the insult offered to the purity and holiness of his divine attributes. When God, in the exercise of his mercy and love, has declared unto men his will by an immediate revelation; when he has given "his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" when he has offered pardon to sinners upon their sincere repentance, vouchsafed them the assistance of his Holy Spirit, to enable them to fulfil this and every other duty enjoined upon them, and promised them eternal life as the reward of their faith and obedience; when, moreover, the wrath of God is, by the gospel, most expressly revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; after all this, to continue still to despise so great salvation—what is it but with a high hand to exalt ourselves against God—an avowed despising and contemning his authority—an actual daring of his vengeance, and saying, in so many words, "we will not have this man to reign over us?" And is this the language of all present who have not embraced the gospel, who have not said to the world by their professed subjection to its holy requirements, that they are on the Lord's side, or who are walking unworthy of such profession? Yes, my brethren and hearers, thus heaven interprets the language of your actions, of your course and conversation in the world. Whatever you may think, whatever you may intend hereafter, if you are now unknown to the gospel, by an open confession of the Lord Jesus Christ before men, you are unknown to God in any saving sense, and unentitled to the hope of the gospel; you are neglecters of this great salvation, purchased at so high a price, so freely offered to you, so earnestly pressed upon you, and pregnant with such infinite consequences. For on this mighty interest no neutrality can be permitted.—"He that is not for me is against me," saith the Lord. And this is confirmed to us by a variety of considerations. For, if sinning barely against the law of nature, the law written in the heart, was sufficient to consign sinners to this sort of unavoidable destruction, well may we ask, "How shall we escape if we" continue to "neglect this great salvation," and to sin against the law of nature

and revelation united. "As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law." If the servant that knew not his LORD's will, who had no express revelation of the will of GOD, was nevertheless to be beaten with stripes, because he did things in themselves worthy of stripes, how much more severely must they expect to be punished, who do the same things in direct opposition to the express will and known command of GOD? Are there any present, then, who know this and yet neglect the gospel? "How shall" they "escape?" Are there any present who know not the conditions of the gospel? GOD forbid! But lest there should be such a one, and to refresh your memories, hear them now —"Repent and believe the gospel;" "repent and be converted every one of you, that your sins may be blotted out;" "except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish," for GOD "now commandeth all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained:" "We must all stand before the judgment seat of CHRIST, that every one may receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil."

If, therefore, after that the clearest light is come into the world, and none under the gospel can plead ignorance of his duty, men will still "neglect this great salvation," there being no excuse left, no alleviation of their condemnation is to be expected. They must perish for ever.

III. Thirdly, the dignity and excellency of the person by and through whom this salvation is proposed to us, is a further aggravation of the sin of rejecting it. "It first began to be spoken by the LORD."

The dignity of the person by whose interposition any favor is procured, and by whom it is transmitted, shows both the greatness and importance of the thing itself, and the love and condescension of the original author of it; and the neglecting it in this case, implies not only folly, contempt, and rebellion, but, moreover, the greatest obstinacy also, which no authority can prevail over, together with the basest ingratitude, which no kindness can overcome. And surely, my friends and hearers, whoever is guilty of this complicated opposition to

God, all of which is implied in the neglect of this great salvation, must be confessed to deserve most justly the severest of punishments. This is what our Saviour compelled the Jews to acknowledge, and made them condemn themselves for it with their own mouths, in the parable of the householder who, having planted a vineyard and let it out to husbandmen, first sent his servants to receive the fruits of it; and when the husbandmen had resisted and slain the servants, he afterwards sent his own son to them, saying, "Surely they will reverence my son;" but him also they resisted and slew—whereupon, when our Saviour appealed to the Pharisees themselves to judge what it was fit for the lord of the vineyard to do unto those husbandmen, they immediately replied, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons." Unwarily, thus, they passed a just sentence against themselves, that for rejecting the gospel preached by Christ himself, they deserved a severer condemnation than their fathers, who had before rejected the preaching and admonitions of the prophets.

And may not a similar condemnation be, in like manner, drawn from the mouth of every soul under the gospel who neglects this great salvation? Is it not, in fact, a refusal, by such, of the fruits of the vineyard to the great Householder, through his only Son? And is not this the very application St. Paul points us to when he says, "now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come." Christians are now the Lord's vineyard, gospel lands are his inheritance, and if any of us refuse the fruits in their season, we bring ourselves into the same condemnation, and must perish in the same miserable destruction.

The argument in favor of the gospel, from the superior dignity of the Revealer, is frequently applied by the apostle in this epistle. In the words immediately before my text, he uses it to enforce the duty of embracing the gospel. "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast," saith he, "and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord." In the

tenth chapter he presses the same argument upon their attention in these words—"He that despised Moses' Law, died without mercy: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who had trodden under foot the Son of God?" And enforces it in the twelfth chapter by a very solemn exhortation—"See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

Lastly, the strength and clearness of the evidence, and the number and greatness of the proofs, made use of to assure men of the truth and certainty of the gospel, is the highest aggravation of the guilt of those who neglect or disobey it.

"The gospel began to be spoken by the Lord, and was afterwards confirmed to us by them that heard him. God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."

The stronger the evidence of any truth be, the more inexcusable is the opposition made to it. And the highest aggravation of this crime is, to continue to oppose a truth after the best and greatest evidence has been given of it that the nature of the thing was capable of. In such a case, opposition can proceed from nothing but either wilful obstinacy and perverseness, or the love of sin in some of its many shapes.

Now this is plainly the case of those who reject the gospel after the undeniable evidences which have been given of its truth. Their rejecting it cannot proceed from want of sufficient conviction, but only from a love of vice, and a resolution not to be reformed, which is a height of wickedness from which the hope, even, of excuse is cut off, and which, the only remedy being rejected, there is no means of amending. When clear light is come into the world, and men still continue their works of darkness, then it becomes evident that their wickedness does not proceed from ignorance and want of instruction, but from choice. "They love darkness rather than light," and stand in open defiance of God and his supreme authority. This is what our Saviour says of the Jews, "If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin. If I had not

done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." This is the reason of his declaring to the cities of Judea "that it should be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for them;" because, "if the mighty works that were done in them had been done in Sodom, it would have repented in sackcloth and ashes." This is the reason of his declaring to those Pharisees who blasphemed the HOLY SPIRIT, that they should never have forgiveness, neither in this world nor in that which is to come; because they resisted the last and greatest means that GOD would ever make use of to bring them to repentance; and not only resisted it, but reviled it also. They saw with their own eyes the clearest and strongest proofs of the truth of the gospel that could possibly be given, and yet they not only withstood the evidence of those mighty works, but ascribed them, moreover, to the agency of the devil. Their crime was singular and unexampled, and their condemnation was likewise singular. But all others, also, who reject the gospel, are, in proportion to the greatness of the evidence they resist, and according to the degree of their obstinacy and wickedness in so doing, in like manner inexcusable, and despisers of Him that speaketh from heaven.

Upon these commanding, just, and reasonable grounds, rests the claim of the gospel of CHRIST to ready and hearty reception from all mankind, and when in addition to this, it is their highest interest to embrace it joyfully and thankfully, to seek its grace, and to occupy themselves diligently in finding the pearl of great price, there cannot be the slightest excuse for indifference, even, to its lively hope. Thousands, however, live in the midst of its light, its privileges, its blessings—thousands look to it in some degree for hope as to hereafter, who are yet perfect strangers to any act or endeavor on their part, to obtain its grace, and experience its transforming power. How, then, shall they escape?

It is but seldom, my friends, that we hear of an open and acknowledged rejecter of the gospel; but we have in abundance the unhappy experience of a carelessness and neglect of its exhortations, encouragement, and commands, which amount to the same thing in fact, and must prove the same

in the event to those who continue thus. How shall they who are thus careless and indifferent as to GOD and their own souls—how shall they escape? Would to GOD that those now before me in this little assembly, who have no interest in the gospel by any personal submission to the law of CHRIST; who have never, by any one act of their lives, unfurled the banner of the cross over them, and said to the world, I am on the LORD's side; who have no claim on the mercy of GOD, beyond baptismal engagements, which they have repeatedly trodden under foot; who know nothing of repentance and contrition for their accumulated sin in this respect, beyond the feeble intention of future amendment; who are engaged with the world, or fluttering down the stream of sin and vanity, of thoughtlessness and unconcern—would to GOD they could be prevailed upon to ask their souls this question, while there is yet, through the goodness of GOD, time, opportunity, and means to escape. For what is thy life, my fellow sinner? A certainty or an uncertainty? And what would be your condition, neglecters of this great salvation, should GOD this night require your souls? How would you appear? What could you answer? Oh! it will be a heart-sinking sound to hear the LORD JESUS CHRIST say, "I never knew you." And as GOD is true, it must and will be said to every soul under the gospel who denies the LORD that bought him, by refusing himself to the profession and practice of his religion. "Whosoever shall confess me before men him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven, but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Why stand ye then here all the day idle? Hath no man hired you? GOD is my witness that I have offered you the work and the wages of the gospel, but the world has the greater attraction, and what can the world do for your souls but sink them into deeper, and deeper, and deeper perdition? What can it plead for you in the day of account, when the reward of your hands shall be given you, when you shall eat the fruit of your doings for ever? Has the world any atonement for sin, any intercession for sinners, to present unto GOD in your behalf? If it has not, and you feel at this moment that it will not answer in that awful day, O be persuaded to carry your thoughts onward till you learn where

only mercy is, where it may be sought and can be found even now—and then ask yourselves, under the solemn certainty of death and judgment, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

Now, to Him who loved us and gave his only begotten Son to die for us, to Him who redeemed us to GOD and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and to Him who sanctifieth all the elect people of GOD—to Father, Son, and HOLY GHOST, be glory, and praise, for ever and ever. AMEN.

SERMON XXII.

THE WARNINGS OF CONSCIENCE NOT TO BE NEGLECTED.

Acts xxiv. 25.

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

Whatever the state of our thoughts may be in regard to religion, or whatever the practice of our lives as respects the great and universal standard of moral justice, there is in every man a sense of retribution and accountability to the Supreme and invisible Governor of the Universe, which meets the sinful propensities of our fallen nature with so pointed a reproof, as to render men inexcusable in the neglect of so faithful a monitor.

Whether the power of this principle, which we call natural conscience, be in itself sufficient to guide men to that moral rectitude which is their first duty towards each other, may admit of much difference of opinion. This much, however, we are warranted in saying, from the highest authority, that to the mass of mankind, in every age of the world, it is the standard by which the righteous Judge of all the earth will regulate his dealings in the great day of eternity—"For those who have not the law are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts; their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." Upon this principle the apostle lays it down as the undoubted doctrine of revelation, that "as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law."

However, therefore, we may be disposed to settle the question as to the power of natural conscience, and to consider it, as some do, as sufficient of itself, without the help of revelation, to bring men to that state of moral perfection which is

required of them by their Maker, and is essential to their peace and happiness both here and hereafter, yet in this we must all agree, that such is the depravity and perverseness of human nature, that something more powerful than the mere conscience of right and wrong—something more quickening than the mere knowledge of a judgment to come, is essential to give to conscience and revelation united their proper effect. Of this our own experience might satisfy us, my brethren. We are not only furnished, in common with the Heathen, with the work of the law written in our hearts, but with the full and clear discovery of God's pure and perfect law. We have not only, in common with the great body of mankind, a confused apprehension of a future judgment, but the explicit knowledge of the rewards and punishments of eternity. We have not only the inward motions and checks of natural conscience and enlightened reason, but the convincing power of God's Holy Spirit speaking within us. And yet what multitudes, like Felix, yea, even more hardened than that poor Heathen—for we read that he trembled under the convincing power of St. Paul's reasoning—what thousands in this Christian land hear continually of death and judgment, of heaven and hell, without being moved at all, except, perhaps, to scoff at them either by speech or conduct, oftentimes by both; while, of the few who occasionally manifest some symptoms of concern, the Roman governor is a faithful copy, in that procrastinating temper which risks doing despite to the Spirit of grace, by putting off till to-morrow the convictions of to-day.

To show you the great and increasing danger of thus trifling with your most serious concern, I shall follow the example of the apostle, and reason with you, in the

First place, of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." I shall

Next endeavor to point out the guilt and folly of neglecting the warnings of your conscience, and the impressions made on your minds by the word of God, whether preached or read; and, then,

Conclude with an application of the whole.

"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy

way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

I. That what I may have to say on the first head may be the more impressive, I shall preface it by an explanation of the points which the apostle pressed upon Felix, to-wit: "righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come." These are alike essential, though in different degrees, to the Heathen, to the infidel, and to the believer. To the first, they are the law written in the heart; to the second, they are the substitute for revealed religion; and to the third, they are the practical effect of the grace of God upon the renewed creature.

By righteousness, as here used by the apostle, we are to understand justice, the rendering to all men their just claims upon us, and this not only in a pecuniary sense, but in that extent which is demanded by a common origin, a common nature, a mutual dependence on each other for whatever can contribute to the advancement of general or particular happiness, and by a common end.

By temperance, which would have been better expressed by the word continence, is meant the rule and mastery of our natural lusts, passions, and appetites, so that they are restrained from hurting either ourselves or others.

By a judgment to come, is to be understood, that account which every one of us shall give to God for the use of a rational nature, for the light of revealed truth, and for the mercies of redemption by Jesus Christ.

Come, then, my hearers, especially those who are as yet in opposition to the gospel, let us reason together of these things. In this short abstract of what the Lord our God requires of us, of what the gospel proposes, and is provided to work in us by the transforming power of grace, what is there to which any of you should be opposed? Are you, indeed, enemies to integrity and fair dealing among men, to peace and order in society, to quiet and repose in the world? Are you desirous that the beastly passions of our nature should be set free from the restraints of law and conscience, and lewdness and incontinence be allowed to revel in unrestrained debauchery? Are you willing that those checks to the commission of secure and secret wickedness, which the apprehensions of futurity alone supply, should be removed from the consciences

of wicked men? No, you will say God forbid that in any of these respects the salutary influence of law and religion on the welfare of the world should be done away. Why, then, let me ask, has not that religion, whose object and aim it is to enforce and enlarge all the relative duties of life, to increase the sum of human happiness in time and to perpetuate it in eternity, your decided countenance and support? Can any one of you—can the collected ingenuity of all put together, render a reason of any kind (for I will not call for a satisfactory one) of your neglect of religion?

But let me reason with you further. Are you not aware that all temporal blessings, that security of life and property, that the endearing relations of family and kindred, with all that sweetens the pilgrimage of this world to us poor, perishing creatures, depend for their whole value on the sanctions of religion? For, however wisely human laws may be contrived, however severely their penalties may be enforced, it is nevertheless to men's natural apprehensions of hereafter that they owe their chief power. The sanctity of an oath, on which the life, the property, the character, peace, and comfort of every man more or less depend, derives its whole importance from this, that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." And the penalty of death, the highest which human laws can inflict, derives its chief terror from the apprehension in the criminal of what awaits him after death. Hence it follows, undeniably, that all neglect or contempt of religion is a public offence, inasmuch as it saps the foundations of social order, and tends directly to the downfall of all that is venerable and desirable in life; and every individual is just so far concerned in the prevalence and advancement of religion among mankind, as he is interested for life and property, for public peace and private repose.

Thus might I continue to reason with you, my friends, and unanswerably too, even from temporal considerations. What, then, ought to be the effect, when we extend our reasonings to those which are eternal; when we consider the awful perfections of Almighty God, the astonishing discoveries made to us by revelation, the wonderful method of our redemption by his only Son becoming a sacrifice for our sins, with all the means provided for the renewal and sanctification of sinful

creatures—and that it is our unspeakable privilege to be called to the knowledge of this grace, and to the hope of eternal life through sanctification of the SPIRIT and belief of the truth? Where can the shadow of a reason be found for indifference to such a lively hope, much more for contempt and opposition to what reason, revelation, and conscience, unite in pressing upon us as our first duty, our highest and best interest? Let me reason with you a little further, my friends. Would the profession and practice of religion make you less valuable members of society?—worse men, worse citizens, worse husbands and wives, worse parents and children, worse relations and friends? You cannot think so. Would they interfere with your progress and advancement in the present life? In no shape whatever, unless, indeed, that advancement depended on unrighteous gain, or was sought for the sake of intemperate enjoyment; for religion requires us to deny ourselves of nothing but ungodliness and worldly lusts. Is it any hardship, is it, indeed, grievous to you, to be true in your sayings, just in your dealings, merciful and compassionate to your fellow creatures, to do unto all men as ye would they should do unto you? Yet this is the law and the prophets. Is there any thing disgraceful or dishonorable in acknowledging your dependence upon your heavenly Father, in praising him for the abundance of his mercy and goodness, in worshipping his glorious majesty, in reverencing his boundless power and might, and in setting your hearts to obey his righteous laws? Yet to fear GOD and keep his commandments is the whole duty of man. Is there any thing discouraging in the hope of eternal life? Yet this is assured to the believer, and to the believer only, in the gospel of CHRIST. Oh, my hearers, what shall we say to these things? What is this world, and all its perishing vanities, to heaven and immortal glory? What will it profit you in the end, if, for a portion of time, you give your souls in exchange? Thus you see that the reasonableness of religion is the great reproach of those who neglect it; for "what doth the LORD thy GOD require of thee, O man, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD?" And thus might I continue to reason with you, my hearers, from the nature of right and wrong, from the conscience of your

own minds, and from the agreement of both with God's revealed word. But as sufficient has been said to satisfy all who are not hardened against truth and reason, I shall pass on to the

II. Next head of my discourse, in which I proposed to point out to you the guilt and folly of neglecting the warnings of your conscience, and the impressions made on your minds by the word of God, whether preached or read.

As it hath pleased God to remove the disability of our fallen condition, so as to make us capable of religion, and this in a manner consistent with his glorious perfections and our qualifications as intelligent, moral creatures, it follows that we have a part to perform in working out our own salvation. To understand what that part is, should, therefore, be our first duty, and to perform it when known, our most earnest endeavor. For the one, we must go to revelation, to the word which God in these last days hath spoken unto us by his Son; for the other, we must apply ourselves to the use of those means by which God works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Now these means are, first, that clear discovery of his will concerning us, made in the Scriptures of our faith; next, the reason and conscience of our own minds; and, lastly, the help and power of his Holy Spirit, by whose enlightening, sanctifying influences the two first become profitable to our eternal salvation; and the constant, unvarying agreement of these three is a powerful proof that they are alike divine in their origin. Hence it follows, that the guilt of neglecting, opposing, and stifling the warnings of the monitor within us, and of the impressions made upon our minds by the word of God, is precisely the guilt of rejecting the counsel of God against our own souls, perversely setting ourselves in opposition to his known will, slighting his promises, defying his threatenings, and daring his vengeance. And the folly of acting thus in a matter of such unspeakable importance as the loss or salvation of our immortal souls, is manifested by the following particulars:—

First, all the helps and advantages we enjoy for the advancement of religion in our souls, are none of them of our own procuring, but the free gift of God's mercy to undeserving creatures; therefore, they are not at our command to come and go at our bidding. "We are saved by grace."

Secondly, we are threatened with the loss of them if slighted or abused—"From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

"Thirdly, if deprived of them, all spiritual attainment is at an end—"Without me," says our LORD, "ye can do nothing."

If to these we add, that it is the very nature of sin persisted in, to harden the heart, and render men callous to reproof and admonition; that all habits are strengthened by indulgence; that our repentance and reformation must be completed in the short and uncertain period of the present life; we cannot but see that carelessness and neglect, thoughtlessness and delay, in such a case, is not merely folly, but the frantic madness of despising our own mercies and provoking GOD to take them from us. And so great is our danger in this respect, that we are, above all other things, cautioned against grieving, quenching, and doing despite to the SPIRIT of grace. "He that being often reproved hardeneth himself, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." "For this cause GOD shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." And yet in defiance of danger, in despite of warnings, what multitudes set aside the invitations of the gospel, the reason of their own minds, the voice of conscience, and the affectionate reproofs and admonitions of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT. What numbers, like the poor Heathen mentioned in the text, say to the united testimony of GOD and nature, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." What an epitome of human nature is this Roman governor! How exactly may every procrastinating, delaying sinner behold his own case in this particular trait of the character of Felix. How strikingly is the power of conscience set before us in the alarm which this cruel and rapacious, this unjust and incontinent Heathen experienced while St. Paul reasoned with him of the consequences which must follow from the righteous judgment of GOD; and yet he had nothing but the light of nature and the witness of his own spirit to testify of the reasonableness, truth, and certainty of the apostle's argument. If, then, the amount of all that the religion of the gospel requires of us is thus found written in our hearts by the finger of GOD—

if the natural apprehensions of what his infinite justice, purity, and holiness demand from reasonable creatures are thus sufficient to alarm the guilty and show the sinner the folly of his ways, what power of language can express the madness of those who, to this universal testimony, have the clear and express declaration of the wrath of GOD revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men—the explicit knowledge that GOD hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness—the awful assurance that eternal happiness or everlasting misery will follow that judgment, according as we have done good or evil—with the blessed promise of the HOLY SPIRIT to make effectual the natural powers and faculties wherewith GOD hath endowed them? Beloved, says the apostle, if our hearts condemn us —if the natural reason and conscience of our own minds bear witness against us, GOD is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things; he sees the secret springs and motives of all our conduct; he, therefore, sees deeper into our guilt, and must surely condemn us.

Thus, my hearers, we are left without excuse every way. Even the plea of ignorance is taken from us; and deep must be the damnation of those who continue to turn a deaf ear to the warnings of conscience and the counsel of GOD by his word and SPIRIT.

The application of what we have said is both general and particular.

As we must all stand before the judgment seat of CHRIST, and shall receive "according to the deeds done in the body," the consequences of that day should be uppermost in our thoughts and foremost in our endeavors; and as it hath pleased GOD to favor us with the rule which shall guide his righteous judgment, the award of that tribunal ought to be the test by which to try the worth of our worldly condition. Whatever our state in this life may be, whether high or low, rich or poor, bond or free, the duties belonging to it form the second great branch of the whole duty of man, and are all comprehended under the two heads of justice and temperance. In the observance of the one, we render to all their dues; by the other, we are restrained from whatever may prove hurtful either to ourselves or to others. And these points, we are

informed by our Lord, in the gospel, will be the subject matter of his righteous judgment. Hence we learn, my hearers, that the great practical purpose of Christ's religion is, the restraint of our sinful, hurtful passions, and the improvement of our moral natures to the attainment of all goodness, righteousness, and truth. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men.

By this rule, then, let us try ourselves and prove our religion; learning, by the example of Felix, that there can be no sure and lasting peace to the unjust and incontinent—that, sooner or later, our sins will find us out—that, however securely or secretly committed, however we may be able to stifle the voice of conscience, yet a day is coming when they will be openly exposed before an assembled universe. If a poor Heathen was constrained to tremble at the prospect of God's righteous judgment on the injustice and lewdness of his life, what alarms should seize their consciences, who, under the light of the gospel, perhaps with the profession of it in their mouths, not only do such things, but have pleasure in them that do them. By the circumstances which belong to this passage of Scripture, we are instructed, that however profitable the practice of fraud and iniquity may be—however high the chase of ambition may exalt us—however gratifying the indulgence of our sensual passions may be, yet a weight is suspended to such practices which acts with accumulating power in sinking such as follow the lusts of the flesh to the lowest grade of infamy. Reason and revelation alike condemn the unjust and sensual person; and the admonition of God's Holy Spirit is responded to by the verdict of conscience, in that state of tremor and alarm with which a sense of guilt, the fear of discovery even among their fellow creatures, with the more terrible apprehensions of a future judgment, haunt the fears of wicked men. From this preponderating weight there is no escape but by the surrender of every hope which can cheer the valley and shadow of death by prospects beyond the grave. The voice of conscience may, indeed, be silenced by custom in sin, but it is not, therefore, dead. Awake it will, most commonly even in this life, as we see exemplified in the case before us; but if not here, yet surely hereafter, when a certain fearful look-

ing for of judgment and fiery indignation shall consume the adversary, not only of God and his fellow creatures, but of his own soul.

The particular application of the subject, is to the most universal sin of which mankind is guilty. Some excel in one species of wickedness and some in another; but in slighting and stifling the secret voice of conscience, in rejecting the admonition of God's holy word, in opposing the convictions of God's Holy Spirit, where is the person who is not, in some good degree, guilty before God, and at this moment conscious of having repeatedly said, if not in words, yet in conduct, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

My fellow sinner, who art thus treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, let the example of poor Felix, and what little I have been enabled to say upon it, be a warning to thee for the time to come. I know thy mind is now busy, and a contest is going on within thee, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh—the pride of thy unhumbled heart against the guilt and folly of persisting in rebellion against God and nature, against the reason of thy own mind, the convictions of thy conscience, and the religion of the gospel. Oh! let me now throw my mite into the scale of thy salvation, and, in the impressive words of my Redeemer, ask thee, "What will it profit thee to gain the whole world and lose thy own soul?" What will the gains of injustice, the enjoyments of sinful pleasure, the praise of men, or the applause of scoffers and mockers at religion, do for thee in that day when God shall judge the secrets of men according to the gospel of Christ? O let not the secret workings of thy heart this day, then, rise in judgment against thee, and another putting off to a more convenient season the many calls and invitations of God's Holy Spirit shut thee up, perhaps, in judicial blindness and hardness of heart. Make not a preached gospel the savor of death to thy soul, by rejecting the truth which is according to godliness, but surrender thyself to that word which now whispers, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

My christian brethren, let us, too, take warning by the ad-

monition given us in the case of Felix. Let us make conscience of what we profess. Remember, that unto whom much is given, of the same shall much be required. That not every one that saith to CHRIST, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. That to all workers of iniquity, to all unchaste and unclean persons, no matter how loud and zealous they may be in a profession of religion, he will say, "I know you not, depart from me, ye cursed." Remember that the agreement of practice with profession constitutes the beauty of holiness; that we are bound to exercise ourselves continually to have a conscience void of offence towards GOD and towards men. Therefore, my brethren, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." An approving conscience is the witness of GOD within us. Watch, therefore, for that testimony; and when, in the many trials of the present life, temptation may get the better of you, listen to the reproof conscience shall then bring with a ready mind, follow the direction it shall give, and let instant repentance and reparation be the convenient season to call for that help which GOD is ever ready to give to those who tremble at his word. Thus shall the kingdom of GOD be set up in your hearts, and righteousness, peace, and joy in the HOLY GHOST, give you a foretaste of that blessedness which awaits the faithful at the right hand of GOD.

SERMON XXIII.

A WARNING TO UNBELIEVERS.

John iii. 18, middle clause.

But he that believeth not, is condemned already.

The great purpose of revelation is, to discover to us mortals, those things which our senses can by no means compass, or of which we at best can have but a feeble and obscure perception. Though the visible things of God, the wonders of the material world, hourly declare his eternal power and godhead, and present him to us in all the splendor of his incommunicable attributes; though the daily and hourly mercies of his providence might teach us that lesson of love, gratitude, and thankfulness, which protection, support, and supply should bring home to our hearts; yet our own experience, to say nothing of the great record of human depravity, might instruct us that more is needed than the outward natural knowledge of God, to contribute to our present or future comfort. The things that may be known of God, from the contemplation of his works, though grand and impressive, are, nevertheless, oppressive and overcoming to our feeble and depraved faculties. So infinite is the distance between the glorious Creator, and the poor, finite, perishing creature, that it appears presumptuous in the extreme to venture upon such lofty meditations. Yet from the very constitution of our nature we are drawn to such contemplations. Whenever our nobler faculties are disengaged from the immediate contact of sensible things, the spirit within us seeks her kindred skies, and the active mind labors to draw aside the veil which shrouds the Eternal from our view. But, alas! my friends, all is darkness and conjecture to our limited powers; and what is worse, all is overwhelming and comfortless to our laboring, anxious minds: clouds and darkness are round about him, so that man cannot search out the Almighty to perfection. What he can attain to, independent of revelation, fills

him with wonder, amazement, and fear; so that he is ready now, as on the first transgression, to hide himself from God—to make his escape from Him, in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being, by whose power he is protected and preserved, by whose mercy he is spared, by whose bounty his wants are supplied, and by whose compassionate love all his disability, ignorance, poverty, weakness, and sinfulness, is provided for and removed.

Could this be so, my hearers, were every thing between God and our souls at peace and in harmony? Could the contemplation of the only wise, infinitely good, and most merciful God, fill our hearts with fear and dismay, were we not conscious of such a separation between him and us as can be removed by no human power? Could our natural notions of that great and good Being who governs the universe be painful and oppressive, were it not that we feel that we are, every way, in every imagination and thought of our hearts, and in the whole practice of our lives, opposed to his righteous government, and unworthy of his regard? Impossible, my brethren; there must be a cause for every effect, and the same argument which is conclusive for the being of God, is equally strong in its application to the existence of sin, as the fatal cause of that enmity and opposition to him, which is manifested in the natural man. If, with the volume of nature spread out before us, we can perceive nothing of God but what binds us up in sullen subjection to his infinite power—if his eternal godhead, abstract from what is revealed, furnishes no channel of help, no comfort of hope, no offer of mercy, to such creatures as we are, what do we not owe, my friends, to that revelation which so richly supplies our severest want, and so freely provides for our highest comfort, in the knowledge of God reconciling the world to himself by Jesus Christ, and in the discoveries made to us of our original, present, and future condition? Here, and here only, can our anxious fears and restless conjectures find repose. And, however impiety may rave, or infidelity muster up her shattered arguments and powerless objections—however the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things may, and, alas! do, defeat the gracious purpose of God in the revelation of his Son, yet, in the closing scene

of this life's pilgrimage, when the hopes and fears of time give place to those of eternity, the united testimony of saint and sinner bears witness to that recorded truth by which the everlasting condition of each shall be determined; then it is, when trembling on the verge of a new being, that those who, in the day of health and strength, in the pursuit of profit and pleasure, care for none of these things, and harden their hearts against the truth, show that there is a witness for revelation which no sophistry can defeat.

To that revelation, then, let me now direct your most earnest attention, as the only source from whence you can derive any useful knowledge of yourselves, any comfortable knowledge of GOD, or any hope that is worth depending upon; and, in going along with me in the consideration of the momentous discovery made in the words of my text, prepare yourselves to settle the most awful inquiry which can occupy the thoughts of accountable beings, to-wit: whether you are believers, in the Scripture sense of the word, or whether you are yet in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.

"For he that believeth not is condemned already."

To assist what I can in this very important inquiry, in the

FIRST place, I shall show you the ground on which our LORD asserts the fact declared in the words of the text—that every unbeliever is condemned already.

SECONDLY, I shall point out to you the method which GOD hath been pleased to provide and appoint for the removal of this condemnation. In the

THIRD place, I shall show you what is meant by believing in CHRIST; and, then,

CONCLUDE with an application of the subject to the different descriptions of those who are now in the presence of GOD for life or for death.

I. First, the ground on which our LORD asserts the fact, declared in the words of the text, that every unbeliever is condemned already, that is, is under a sentence of eternal death.

Before I come directly to the point, I wish to premise that the words of my text are a part of that remarkable discourse which our blessed LORD held with Nicodemus. The inquiry of the Jewish Rabbi was prompted by an anxious concern for the welfare of his soul. Though a member of the Jewish

Sanhedrim, and from what we learn of him in holy writ, a worthy member of the Old Testament Church, yet the fame of our Saviour's miracles, and the nature of his doctrine, led him to such a consideration of all that Moses and the prophets had spoken, that he saw there was yet in reserve a fulfilment of the mercy promised to the fathers, which embraced still clearer discoveries of that great purpose of GOD, which was obscurely shadowed out in the sacrifices and expiations of the ceremonial law. The fulness of time, too, was come, in which He who was the desire of all nations should be manifested to Israel. From all these circumstances he was moved, I doubt not, by the SPIRIT OF GOD, to desire that interview with JESUS of Nazareth which St. John has recorded, from which he received the great outline of the gospel, and from which we derive, in express words, those fundamental doctrines which, however they may be contained in and inferred from other passages of the Scriptures, yet had this part of the gospel never come down to us, would have been, more than they now are, the objects of dispute and contention in the Christian world. Hardly, my hearers, do we believe what GOD hath spoken to us by his Son, of the truth of which we have an internal witness—eagerly do we catch at any supposed ambiguity in the great rule of our religious duties, and most willingly would we pare down the law of righteousness to our sinful standard. What, then, would have been our darkness had these first principles been wrapt up in that mystery which would have opened to the most persevering and anxious research, and to that alone, the foundation of our hope, the rule of our conduct. Mark here, my brethren, the wisdom and prudence of Him, who, seeing from the beginning to the end, and knowing what is in man, hath so directed the revelation of his will that he that runs may read, that he that hears may understand, that he that understands may apply—so that he that thus hath may have more abundance, while he that thus hath not shall be deprived of that which he seemeth to have, that every mouth may be stopped before GOD, and our final condemnation proceed from our own lips. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of GOD; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out."

These reflections, my hearers, are drawn from me, not only from the circumstances attending the words which make the subject matter of my discourse, but because they strike at the root of that carelessness and neglect of the Scriptures which is the true cause of the unbelief and impiety which abound among us, at that presumptuous enlargement and contraction of God's true and faithful word, which shall make it fit our depraved standard, and give countenance to a hope which is like the spider's web or the chaff which the wind scattereth abroad upon the face of the earth.

But, my brethren and hearers, this vain and delusive, unfounded and inconsiderate hope, in the sweeping exercise of which so many take shelter while they are perfect strangers to the only foundation, is rooted out by the words of my text, which contain a doctrine of all others the most abhorrent to the nominal superficial believer in the Christian religion. They affirm, in terms which admit of no subterfuge or qualification, the fallen, ruined condition of the human race—the total separation from God, and absolute condemnation to death, temporal and eternal, which original sin drew upon Adam and all his posterity, and as a clear consequence, the utter incapacity of man to retrieve himself from this body of death—the corruption of all his faculties—the destruction of all his vain and self-righteous hopes. This is the fact which our Lord affirms so strongly in the words of my text; and the ground or reason on which the assertion is made, is this:—

When it pleased God to call into existence a race of beings, made only a little lower than the angels, and endued with all the faculties correspondent to their place in the scale of creation, he placed them under the direction of a law, pure, holy, and perfect, a transcript of the divine perfections. In obedience to this law for a season—(according to the universal impressions of all divines, though no where in the word of God so far as I know it, is the limit defined; nevertheless, from the circumstances it is fairly inferred)—in obedience to this law for a season, I say, a deathless life and immortal glory were attainable, while the awful alternative of endless death and eternal misery were fairly threatened as the consequence of disobedience. "This do, and thou shalt

live"—this transgress, and thou shalt die, was the fair and declared condition upon which man, thoroughly furnished for his trial, stood for immortality. But he transgressed and fell, he disobeyed and incurred the curse—"In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Die he did, my brethren, to all spiritual and heavenly purposes; the image of God in his soul was extinguished, the empire of death over his body was established, and an impassable barrier between heaven and earth was built up by human sin, which no human righteousness could take away. But he fell not alone—the curse of the law was not exhausted on the transgressor, nor the appetite of death satisfied with one sacrifice—with him his posterity were subjected to all the penalties consequent on his sin. "For as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, in that all have sinned." But let no man say there is unrighteousness with God, in thus "visiting the sins of the father upon the children." For, as we who are his posterity would have shared all the advantages of his triumph had he stood, the justice of God stands clear of all imputation in our suffering under the consequences of his disgrace, even though we have "not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression."

Such, my hearers, is the ground or reason of that universal condemnation asserted in the text. For disobedience to this pure and holy law, in the progenitor and representative of the human race, the sentence of the law hath gone forth against all mankind; and they are unalterably bound by the infinite truth, purity, holiness, and justice of Almighty God, to the performance or the penalty. This is the true state of every soul born into this present evil world. The rigorous demands of the law must be complied with, the offended justice of God must be satisfied, while our fallen condition has rendered either impossible. Shut up and concluded under sin, independent of our own personal transgressions against God, well may we join the apostle Paul, in his deep experience of the boundless extent of our depravity and ruin, and exclaim with him, O wretched creatures that we are! who shall deliver us from the body of this death? Delivered we must be, my hearers, or perish eternally; and, thanks be to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ this deliverance is freely offered in the gospel to every child of Adam.

II. Of the method of this deliverance I am now, in the second place, to speak.

It is a remark I have somewhere met with, that man's extremity is GOD's opportunity. And while this is verified in the constant experience of his providence, it is most powerfully brought home to the heart in the contemplation of the riches of his grace, in the redemption of the world by his only begotten Son.

Sunk in all the misery and helplessness of sin; justly cast off from the favor of GOD; pursued by the curse of the broken law; exposed to the vengeance which infinite justice demanded, whither could the fallen sinner flee? Heaven was barred against him; the earth was cursed for his sake; hell was moved from beneath to receive him; no mercy could be found in the law itself; future obedience, had it been possible, could avail nothing to cancel the debt already contracted—"Thus, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." In this extremity, GOD, who is rich in mercy, had compassion on the work of his hands, and, by his only begotten Son, provided for our recovery. To remove the condemnation under which we labored, consistent with the dignity and holiness of JEHOVAH, no other mode remained, than by rendering to offended justice the satisfaction required by the broken law, and to the law itself, the obedience demanded by the purity and holiness of its precepts. This was the price to be paid for our ransom—the purchase of that mercy, which, by the gospel, is freely offered to us. As we fell in a representative, so in a representative are we saved. The LORD JESUS, by the will of GOD, became the representative of fallen man, undertook in our stead to fulfil the demands of the law, and atone for our sins. Hence the deep mystery of the incarnation of the Son of GOD, that, in the very truth of that nature in which it was broken, the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled. That he who, as GOD, could not suffer, might, in the pain and agony of the cross, taste death for every man, and expiate the guilt of human sin. By this great and gracious undertaking of our blessed LORD, the relation in which man stood to his Creator was changed. By the personal obedience of JESUS as our representative, the law was fulfilled and honored. By the personal

sufferings of the Son of GOD, in our stead, full satisfaction was made to the Divine justice, and a door of mercy opened, so that GOD could be "just, and the justifier of him that believed in JESUS." The demands of the law being fully satisfied "by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life." This great, glorious, and gracious undertaking, my brethren, is the foundation of the gospel; and the gospel itself is a communication from heaven, declaring the glad tidings to sinful mortals, for the obedience of faith; that is, that they might believe, obey, and be saved. In this message of grace, GOD reveals himself, by his Son, reconciled to his creatures; and, in the freeness and fulness of his mercy, discharges them from the law or covenant of works, and proposes a new and more gracious covenant, according to which, the reward of eternal life is promised to the renewed obedience of penitent sinners, through faith which is in CHRIST JESUS. "Him hath GOD exalted a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins." To him is committed the management and direction of that Church which he bought with his own blood; in him is laid up for us sinners, fulness of grace to sanctify and save; and to him is transferred and made over, the right to judge his people, to acquit and condemn them, according to the merciful and gracious terms of the gospel. So that every way, "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," save only "the name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth."

Thus we see, my brethren, the wonderful method which the wisdom of GOD hath provided and appointed for our deliverance from the curse of the law, to remove the condemnation which sin had brought upon the world, and make room for the exercise of mercy; and this in a way consistent with all his perfections—so that "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." And thus we see the ground of the grand doctrine of our religion, salvation by grace through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast. We were gone for ever, my hearers, every way lost and undone, condemned by the righteous judgment of GOD, and delivered over to the awful consequences of sin and rebellion.

To relieve or deliver from this condition, there was no help in man—no atonement in his power to make. Therefore, if saved at all, it must be by an act of grace or favor on the part of GOD; and the method, together with the means, must be altogether of his appointment. But of what use to us if not made known? "How shall we call on Him in whom we have not believed, and how shall we believe on Him of whom we have not heard, and how shall we hear without a preacher," without a revelation from GOD? Ponder these things, ye who carelessly neglect the word of GOD and the means of grace. Commune with your own hearts, and see what you can do, or what you can hope for, without this help from heaven; and be no longer faithless but believing—no longer reject the counsel of GOD against your own souls, but submit yourselves to the righteousness of GOD, which, by the gospel, is now manifested without the law, even that righteousness which is by faith of JESUS CHRIST. "For he that believeth not is condemned already."

I come now, in the

III. Third place, to show you what is meant by believing in CHRIST.

And, first, it is to believe all that GOD has revealed to us in the Scriptures—a hearty, humble assent to the truth of our own condition as therein made known to us. This it is which must prepare the way for our recovery from the power of sin and Satan, and turn our views to GOD; for nothing but a knowledge of our disease can bring us to seek a remedy against it. All that we can perceive with our outward senses speaks to us of a Power supreme and invisible, by whom all things are created and upheld, and "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." Our relation to that Being, and the purpose we are to answer in the infinite scale of his works, must ever be a subject of anxious thought and inquiry to a reasonable creature. But whence shall we derive this knowledge unless from the source of all wisdom, and goodness, and truth? "Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they find it." Natural things, those which are outward and the objects of our senses, we are capable, in some good degree, of comprehending; but all beyond is darkness, doubt, and conjecture. "Where, then, shall wisdom be

found, and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living." Whence, then, but by revelation can we compass it? For "God alone understandeth the way thereof, and knoweth the place thereof." To him, then, alone must we look, and from him alone can we receive what is so needful to our present comfort, so encouraging to our future hopes. For all that our internal senses, the active power of our souls in the exercise of our rational faculties, can bring us to, is, the deplorable darkness and ignorance under which we labor respecting spiritual things, so that the word which God hath revealed to us by his Son is no less the subject matter of faith than the object of desire to every considerate, well disposed mind. Hence we see, my hearers, that neglect or rejection of revelation is a bar to all progress or advancement in the way of salvation, inasmuch as it is equally a contempt of our own wants and of God's mercy—of the reason of our own minds and of the truth as it is in Jesus. And hence it is, that so many are delivered over to strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, in some invention of man or deceit of the devil, to the ruin of their souls—"Who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." O that those who are brave enough thus to risk their immortal souls in neglecting this great salvation, would but consider their folly in thinking themselves wiser than God, and better able to understand his will and purpose, in the salvation of sinners, than that Word which was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and hath plainly showed unto us the way of salvation.

Secondly, it is so to believe the testimony God hath given of his Son in the Scriptures of truth, as to rely on him for life and salvation. This includes in it, my brethren, a reception of Jesus as the light and life of men—as the word and wisdom of God, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth—the great atonement for our lives in the sacrifice of the cross—the assurance of our hope in the triumph of his resurrection—the dependence of his people for every supply of spiritual grace—the only Mediator between God and man—the great Intercessor through whom the infirmity of our prayers and the unworthiness of our best services find acceptance with God—the Revealer of his will to us creatures

—LORD of all things—Judge of all men—GOD manifest in the flesh to destroy the works of the devil. With these commanding claims on our attention, the gospel invites us to come to him—to receive him as THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, and to commit our souls, bodies, and spirits, to his love, faithfulness, and power, for eternal life. It includes, also, a renunciation of all merit or deserving on our part, from any righteousness of our own; all proud, lofty endeavor of ourselves to please GOD, and by our works to purchase salvation. This is the hard saying which few are able to hear—this is the great stumbling block to the pride of our fallen nature; but it is the very entrance to salvation by grace through faith. For if righteousness come by the law—if we as fallen creatures can answer the demands of the law, then is CHRIST dead in vain. By thus going about to establish our own righteousness, we rebel against that righteousness of GOD's appointment which is by faith of JESUS CHRIST. "For he is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth and speaketh on this wise." That "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the LORD JESUS, and shalt believe in thine heart that GOD hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Lastly, it is heartily and steadily to obey the commands of CHRIST delivered to us in the gospel.

This is the crown of the whole, the only evidence we can have that we possess the faith of GOD's elect, the saving faith of the gospel, which unites us to our living Head as branches to the vine, and derives from him that living power which overcomes the world; that spiritual help by which holiness is begun, maintained, and perfected in the present life, making us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Any other notion of faith, my hearers, is false and unscriptural—any other definition of it than as a principle of love and obedience, is sure to cast those who entertain it into all the danger and difficulty of antinomian delusion or Pharisaical presumption. Bare abstract believing can save no man. "It is dead," says St. James, "being alone;" which is fully confirmed by John the Baptist's declaration—"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of GOD abideth on him;" that is, "he is condemned already, because he hath

not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God," so as to keep his commandments.

It remains to apply what has been said.

It appears, then, my hearers, that we stand in the situation of condemned criminals reprieved by the mercy of the judge; that the present life is to determine whether the original sentence shall be executed upon us or not. This in itself is more than sufficient to stir up every exertion we are capable of, to escape the condemnation we labor under. But when, in addition to this, we consider that the compassion of God and love of Christ hath provided, not only for our escape from a most just sentence, but for our attainment of the original glory and blessedness from which sin had shut us out, what limit should there be to the grateful love with which we should hear and receive the glad tidings of mercy revealed in the gospel—to that willing obedience we should render to what is required of us?

Let me ask you, then—and O that God would help you to the true answer—are you believers or not in the name of the only begotten Son of God? On the answer you can make to this important question depends all that can be dear to you in time and in eternity. Therefore, let me exhort you, by the worth of your immortal souls, not to trifle with this solemn inquiry. Many, it is to be feared, have built up for themselves some unhallowed hope in which they speak peace to themselves while there is no peace. Careless of God's revealed word, ignorant of the true condition of human nature, and of the terms of salvation through faith in a crucified Saviour, they run, blinded by their own folly and presumption, headlong to destruction. To such, let the solemn warning of my text be a word in season this day. Against the condemnation therein proclaimed there is but one refuge, in a hearty submission to God's appointed method of deliverance by faith in that Jesus who died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. Let those who consent in general to the truth of revelation, but go no deeper into it than to skim from the surface a vague and indeterminate trust in God's mercy, learn from hence, that that mercy has a rule, and that no otherwise can it be applied to their souls than by a real, living, and effectual reception of the truth, to the renewal and sanctification of the life.

To those who trust in the morality of their lives—who flatter themselves that they do no harm—that they are, upon the whole, better than others, and proudly trust in their own righteousness, renouncing it only in words—let the words of my text give a juster view of themselves, and show them that in the LORD JESUS only have we righteousness and strength. That until we are interested in him by the faith of the operation of GOD, we are condemned and helpless aliens from GOD, and without a hope of his mercy. And let the whole tribe of careless, thoughtless, prayerless, world-hunting, pleasure-loving creatures, see here their true condition. Condemned already, and wasting the precious moments of their reprieve in "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath." O that GOD would now be pleased to touch your hearts, to show you your danger, and to sanctify his true and faithful word to awaken you from the sleep of death, before everlasting ruin seize upon your souls. AMEN.

SERMON XXIV.

THE DANGER OF FORFEITING THE HEAVENLY REST.

HEBREWS iv. 1.

Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning," says the apostle; the volume of inspiration, therefore, contains all that is wanted by us for "instruction in righteousness." And in this collection of the experience of the people of GOD in past ages, we see as in a glass, my brethren, the contest of our fallen nature with divine grace, and are admonished, both by the failure and success of those who have gone before us, to take heed to ourselves, and to increase our "diligence," in making "our calling and election sure." But more particularly, in the dealings of GOD with the children of Israel, his chosen people, is the Christian Church admonished to take heed, lest there be in any of its members "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living GOD," either by perverting the doctrines or by departing from the precepts of the gospel. For, says the same apostle, "all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

Very frequent, therefore, are the allusions made in the New Testament to the fate and fortunes of the Jewish people; and in this epistle, addressed expressly to persons of that nation, who had embraced Christianity, does their countryman, St. Paul, "a Hebrew of the Hebrews" and "an Apostle of JESUS CHRIST," point out the close connexion of the two dispensations, and establish the superior dignity and importance of the gospel, both in its helps and in its promises. In the chapter immediately preceding that from which my text is taken, having drawn a comparison between the promises made through Moses to the Israelites, as the peculiar people

of God, of a temporal inheritance, and of a peaceful and honorable rest in the land of Canaan, on condition of their obedience to the divine commands; and the assurances which Christ gives in the gospel, to his faithful followers, of an eternal inheritance and glorious rest in the heavenly Canaan;—and having shown that the Israelites, by their unbelief and rebellion against God, had forfeited the promised rest, and were condemned to wander as outcasts, and to die in the wilderness; he draws from this very noted circumstance in the history of that people, not only here, but in many other passages of his writings, a warning to Christians, lest they also, "after the same example of unbelief," should forfeit the heavenly rest and inheritance promised to them as the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. Hence the great importance of the exhortation in my text. Let us Christians, also, fear, lest we forfeit the high privileges and unspeakable blessings promised through our Lord Jesus Christ, by a like disobedience and rebellion against the Captain of our salvation.

God has indeed called us, my brethren and hearers, to a glorious hope of everlasting life and happiness, through our blessed Redeemer. He has given us all reasonable certainty and assurance, that we shall in due time be made partakers of it; but there are conditions required on our part, both to qualify us for and to entitle us to this happiness. And if, as did the Israelites, we fail to fulfil them, we shall, like them, find our expectations cut off, and a far sorer punishment incurred, in proportion as the high discoveries of the gospel exceed the shadows of the legal dispensation.

That we may come short of it, as they did, is not only possible, but greatly to be feared, for two reasons. One is, that we are men of like passions with those who have gone before us—of the same fallen nature, and exposed to the same temptations. The other is, that failure, as well as success, is inseparable from a state of trial, such as the present life.

That we may succeed, is not only possible, but the highest assurance is given, that success is attainable if we strive for it. First, from the invitations of the gospel. For God cannot mock and delude his creatures with offers of an impossible attainment. And secondly, from the effectual provision made therefor, by the operation and assistance of divine grace.

That God has left us "a promise of entering into his rest," and graciously provided the means whereby it may be attained, is the only ground on which exertion and endeavor can be put forth by rational beings, under a state of probation. Break in upon this principle by any modification of the doctrines of the gospel, and you at once render religion, or the love and service of God with accountability, impossible to man, as a moral being. Whatever our blessed Saviour did or suffered whilst he was upon earth, or has commanded us to do or to suffer after his example; all the precepts, all the promises, all the threatenings, all the discoveries of the gospel, are but one continued argument to convince men of this truth, and to engage them to act upon it. If there be no such thing as another life after this, in which we shall receive the everlasting reward of faith and obedience, or suffer the eternal punishment of sin and unbelief, then the whole business of religion is an illusion. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But if there be another life, then does religion stand forth as the one thing needful, and call upon all to whom the knowledge of this great salvation is vouchsafed, to ask themselves, "What shall the end be of those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?" "Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

In discoursing on these words, I shall, in the

First place, endeavor to show you the greatness and the certainty of the reward promised hereafter to the righteous.

Secondly, what good reason the apostle had to exhort Christians to fear lest they should forfeit it.

Thirdly, I shall conclude with an application of the subject.

I. First, I am to show the greatness and the certainty of the reward promised hereafter to the righteous.

This, though a subject never to be fully apprehended by us until we come to the enjoyment of it, is, nevertheless, very necessary and profitable to be frequently in our thoughts, my brethren, in order to animate and encourage us to "hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." The person who seldom meditates upon heaven, and upon the reward laid up for the righteous, will soon cease to strive

for the crown of glory, and soon be taken captive by the world and its delights. The affections cannot long remain unoccupied, and if no pains are taken to direct them to better things, they will fix themselves according to the corrupt and perverted bias which sin has produced in all our inclinations. It is not, indeed, for me to speak as with knowledge of those excellent and glorious things which are, as yet, the objects not of sense but of faith. Even St. Paul himself, though caught up into paradise, and admitted to the nearest contemplation of them—to what no mortal man but himself ever enjoyed—yet all that inspiration enabled him to say on this unutterable subject was, to declare, that "eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But notwithstanding this is so, yet—as in speaking of God himself, though we cannot fully comprehend the divine nature, yet by putting together the highest ideas we can form of his infinite perfections as revealed to us in the Scriptures, we can raise in our souls some suitable though faint apprehensions of the glory and excellency of the divine character—so here also, it has pleased our good and gracious God to give us such general descriptions of the everlasting rest as may suffice to warm our hearts with longing desires for it, and to quicken our endeavors to diligence and perseverence in the attainment of it. And this he has done, as most suitable to our clouded and limited faculties, chiefly by the contrast of our present condition.

Here we live in a vale of misery surrounded by sin and sorrow, and only measuring the good by its exemption from evil. From the cradle to the grave, life is one unceasing effort to fence off the miseries which our own sinful propensities bring upon us, or which are occasioned by the wickedness of others, while disease and suffering in ourselves or in those nearest to our affections break in upon our partial enjoyments, and death, either near at hand or in the distance, marks the sum of earthly good with such a transitory character as thoughtlessness alone can esteem. But in heaven, as the word of God teaches us, there will be a perfect deliverance from all trouble. No pains or diseases, no weakness or infirmity, shall affect our incorruptible bodies; no lusts or

passions, no irregular or inordinate desires, shall discompose our souls. For sin, the cause of all our present misery, shall be shut out for ever from the abodes of the righteous, and with it whatever can possibly defeat, or even interrupt, the pure and unmixed felicity which flows from the presence of GOD.

Here we live, my brethren, in a continual warfare with our spiritual enemies. Temptations surround and assault us on every side; "the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," so that it is a continual struggle between our desires and our duty. But heaven is a place as innocent as it is glorious. There no temptation will draw us from our duty, or render it painful in the performance, but it will be the eager bent and desire of our souls to perform the pure and perfect will of GOD. There it will be not only our employment but our delight, unceasingly to adore and worship the infinite perfections of our GOD and Saviour, continually manifested to our ravished view—to praise and magnify his holy name for the redemption of our souls from everlasting death, and for conferring upon us such a state of happiness and glory.

Here we live in the continual expectation, that death will soon, and we know not how soon, put an end to the enjoyments this world can bestow. But in heaven no such apprehension shall be known. In the heavenly rest there shall be no more death, no change or decay, no end or abatement of bliss for ever and ever.

Oh! what heartfelt thanksgivings to GOD and the Lamb, what loud hosannas of praise, will spring from the lips of the redeemed, when faith shall be lost in sight, and hope swallowed up in enjoyment; when eye to eye, and face to face, my brethren, we behold that JESUS who laid down his life for our souls, and bought with his own most precious blood this rich inheritance of endless glory for us, lost and ruined sinners! Oh! what joy and gladness when long separated friends meet to part no more—when the remembrance of past sorrows will increase the sense of present bliss, and inflame every heart and inspire every tongue to ascribe "to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, blessing, and glory, and honor, and power for ever!" Oh! what a glorious

meeting, my dear brethren, when we come "to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to GOD the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to JESUS the mediator of the new covenant"—when from the church militant we become members of the church triumphant, and, receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, find all that we now "see as through a glass darkly," realized, and exceeding the utmost stretch of imagination. Who is not athirst for such pure, and glorious, and lasting enjoyments? Who is not willing to exchange the fleeting, unsatisfying vanities of the world for the rest that remaineth to the people of GOD? O ye deluded, sin-deceived souls, who, for a portion in this life, barter away your birthright; who, for the perishing riches, honors, and pleasures of the world, make light of the unsearchable riches of CHRIST; awake, and consider your ways—ask yourselves about eternity, about death and judgment, about heaven and hell—inquire what your present pursuits are doing for your souls, and where you would take your rest were GOD this night to require them of you—think of the worm that never dies, of the fire that never shall be quenched. Contrast these with the fulness of joy which the presence of GOD sheds over the mansions of rest and blessedness, and ask your souls what will it profit to gain this world and all it has to bestow, if in exchange heaven must be surrendered?

And let those who, by their Christian profession, say plainly that they seek a better country, treasure up in their hearts the greatness and the certainty of their reward, as the great preservative against coming short of it. "Set your affections on things above," my brethren, and let the frequent contemplation strengthen you to put down those worldly lusts which war against the soul, and animate you to watch and pray, to wrestle and strive, to do, and even to suffer, according to the will of GOD, that you may reap a full reward. Let not the baubles of the world despoil you of your heavenly crown.

But a little while, and He that shall come, will come to gather you to himself. But a little while, and the strife and turmoil of this sinful world will be over, and rest and peace,

repose and safety, endless, undisturbed, and increasing, be your rich reward. This is the rest, however faintly I have described it, of which my text speaks, which is provided for the people of GOD, and of which we shall be made partakers if we live here answerably to such glorious expectations. But it may be forfeited, my text tells us. In various ways we may come short of it, and this the apostle urges as a ground of caution to Christians. "Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." I will, therefore,

II. Secondly, endeavor to show, what good reason the apostle had to exhort Christians to fear, lest they should forfeit it.

If our first parents, in the integrity of their moral powers, declined from God, and, by yielding to temptation, forfeited the happy condition in which they were placed by their Creator, what have not we, their corrupt and sinful progeny, with broken powers and perverted wills, to fear—lest we also fail, in the trial granted us by the divine compassion, to regain the inheritance forfeited by sin—lest we also abuse the grace given us in our Redeemer, CHRIST JESUS, and come short of our high calling of GOD in him!

If the Israelites, under a dispensation of religion which presented its proofs and its sanctions to their senses, gave way to unbelief—if the miraculous food and drink which followed them in all their wanderings in the wilderness, and hourly reminded them of that GOD, whose voice they heard and whose presence was manifested in the mount that burned with fire, proved unequal to restrain the corrupt propensities of a sinful nature in them, with good reason is the Christian, under a dispensation whose sanctions are discerned by faith only, exhorted "to work out his salvation with fear and trembling," and to be diligent and watchful, lest through carelessness or neglect, through love of the world, or the prevalence of any other corruption, he forfeit the heavenly rest.

If the promises of GOD were absolute and unconditional, and religious attainment independent on any exertions of our own, all fear of the event would be useless, and all exhortation to caution and watchfulness would be superfluous. But when this is not the case, when the whole tenor of Scripture as well as the reason of the thing demonstrates, that the pre-

mises of God to his people are all conditional, that there are duties to be performed on their part in order to obtain the reward promised on God's part, they cannot be too frequently or too earnestly exhorted to bear continually in mind, that "we are made partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end"—that "he that endureth to the end the same shall be saved," and that God declares, "if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

God has plainly set before us the terms of our salvation—what we are to believe, and what we are to do, if we hope to attain it. Should not we, therefore, my hearers, who are born and raised under the light and privileges of the gospel, be very careful not to come short of the high reward therein offered us, by suffering any present interests or temptations to draw us aside from our duty? Yet we see thousands in this Christian land acting as carelessly respecting eternity as if its happy attainment depended on the neglect of religious duty. Surely, then, there is not only good but great reason to exhort such persons to consider, how vain the hope must be of the favor of God and eternal life, if they persist in a course of sin and disregard of the gospel. No one can possibly have any pretensions to sincerity who professes to believe the gospel, and yet openly neglects the appointments of religion. There is something in the very sound of an eternal reward or punishment—believed in—that forbids the desperate risk; and yet there are multitudes who, because they are friendly to religion as it is called, flatter themselves with the hope of acceptance through the merits of the Saviour, and expect to gain the eternal reward without the self-denials and surrenders of religion. Now what is to withstand this delusion but the exhortations derived from the revealed danger, that we may "fail of the grace of God," that we must sow if we expect to reap, that we must labor and strive if we would gain a crown of life, and that we must openly confess Christ before the world if we hope to be owned by him before his Father and the holy angels in the great day of account.

If men can be saved without the sacraments of religion, where opportunity is had for their reception, it would be very difficult to account for their being so very solemnly enacted,

and so very reverently esteemed, and profitably used, by all truly pious persons. Yet there are multitudes of these friends to religion, who come to their death-bed with their baptismal vows broken, their repentance unacknowledged, and their faith unprofessed over the broken body and shed blood of JESUS CHRIST, "evidently set forth crucified" among or before them, in the Holy Communion, as the appointed memorial of his death. And is there no danger that such should come short of the rest he hath purchased for them? no good reason why such should be warned and exhorted, lest they be found in the number to whom CHRIST will say, "I never knew you." Alas! my dear hearers, trifle not thus with your souls; waste not your day of grace in vain and unfounded expectations, but learn to fear that you may fail, that thus you may be stirred up to enter in at the strait gate, and to walk in the narrow way, which leadeth unto life. And even among professors of religion—among those who confess the LORD JESUS CHRIST before men, as their only hope of the heavenly rest, is it needful and profitable to remind them that if they "would enter into life, they must keep the commandments," they must "stir up the gift of GOD that is in them," and return their LORD's goods—his heavenly grace, and providential condition in the world—with increase, otherwise they will come short of their high calling, and take their portion with the unprofitable servant. My dear brethren, the world is against you, your own hearts are against you, the enemy of GOD and man is against you! Is there not, then, good reason to fear these potent adversaries so as to increase your caution and watchfulness, lest they betray you in some snare and entangle you in their deceits, and thus prevail against your hope, by blinding you against the danger of coming short of it? St. Paul thought it very necessary to give this caution, even to primitive Christians; and experience must surely teach us, that it is yet "a word in season." And it will be a word in season to all who so learn from it to distrust themselves, as to cleave closer and closer to their great and effectual defence in the LORD JESUS CHRIST; and in obedience to his holy commandments, and blessed example, so "pass the time of their sojourning here in fear," as to increase their diligence and earnestness, "that when their LORD cometh he

may find them ready, with their loins girded about and their lights burning."

Thus have I showed you, my brethren and hearers, what good reason the apostle had to exhort Christians to fear, lest they should forfeit the heavenly rest. And the application I wish to make of what has been said, is, to increase the care and diligence of professors of religion, in working out their eternal salvation; to strengthen and encourage the feeble and the timid to stay themselves upon the living GOD; and to awaken the careless of every description, from the dreadful delusion of meeting with unasked mercy, and of obtaining unsought salvation.

My professing brethren, we stand on trial, from first to last, as believers in CHRIST; and can no otherwise secure the crown of life and glory, than by "giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure." As accountable beings we have each of us his own part to perform, his particular talent to improve. As fallen, sinful creatures, our sufficiency for all spiritual attainment is of GOD, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST. "We are saved by grace." And because of this sufficiency conferred upon all mankind, it is, that we are capable of religion, and shall be rewarded or punished everlastingly, according to our conduct in the present life. On this, there is no discretion to any. "He that believeth not is condemned already," and he that believeth shall be judged by the word spoken unto him in the gospel. As believers, the word of GOD is your only standard; by that you must measure your hope, and try the foundation on which it is built; by that you must examine your life, and determine its conformity to the divine pattern in the man CHRIST JESUS. Short of this, your hope cannot be such as will stand the trial of the great day.

Now, in this standard, the prize and the forfeit are plainly set before you; the road you have to travel clearly marked out; the dangers and the difficulties you have to encounter are distinctly set forth; the help you may look for is openly proclaimed; and to quicken your diligence, GOD hath warned you that such is the woful corruption of your nature, that you may, nevertheless, miss "the prize of your high calling," and "come short" of the heavenly "rest." What becomes us,

then, my brethren, under such circumstances, but that fear, and care, and jealousy of ourselves, which shall produce a more unreserved surrender of heart and life to the power and grace of our ever merciful Redeemer? "Without Him we can do nothing," but in his name and strength "all things are possible" to the believer. Keep continually before you, therefore, your reward and your duty, your danger and your help, and, with St. Paul, do this one thing—"Forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto the things that are before, press toward the mark; counting all things but loss, that you may win CHRIST, and be found in him," and receive the joyful salutation of "well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy LORD."

And let the feeble and the timid believer, who is conscious of the power of his corruptions, derive courage to contend against them, from the promises of GOD. "He hath laid help" for you, my brethren, "on one who is mighty" and able to save; upon one who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax; who laid down his life for your souls, that, by this proof of unbounded love, he might draw all men to GOD.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; being persuaded of this one thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will carry it on unto the day of CHRIST."

A knowledge of your weakness, my brethren, is the best security against presumption, and the strongest argument for watchfulness and increased earnestness in prayer. Let distrust of yourselves, then, bring you nearer to GOD for grace to help in time of need; and his strength shall be made perfect in your weakness, and the work of faith be fulfilled with power.

Lastly, let the fear here spoken of, from the awful possibility, yea, from the plain and obvious danger, that men may "receive the grace of GOD in vain," and even Christians, GOD's peculiar people, "come short" of the reward promised to faith and obedience, be a word in season to all who have hitherto been careless and unconcerned about their souls. "If

the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" This is a question which all who hear me can answer and apply to themselves. God grant that it may awaken them to the danger of delay, on so momentous an interest as their eternal condition. "Fools," it is said, "make a mock at sin;" but what name must those deserve who make a mock at salvation, and spurn from their regard an everlasting inheritance of heavenly glory! Merciful God! rend the veil from their hearts, by the convincing power of thy Holy Spirit. Let not thy word return unto thee empty, but bless thy truth, that it may be fruitful to thy praise, in hearts awakened to thy fear, and encouraged to cleave to thy grace in working out their everlasting salvation.

SERMON XXV.

THE RULE OF FUTURE JUDGMENT.

MATTHEW vii. 21.

Not every one that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

The discoveries of the gospel are of a very awful and interesting character, my brethren, and very closely allied to the original and better impressions of our own hearts. There is no one, I presume, who has not at some time, perhaps very frequently, found his thoughts drawn out to a future state of being, and his mind engaged, however transiently, on his own personal condition in another world. And whoever has attended to his own experience, even thus far, must have some perception of the great uncertainty of all conclusions of a future state, derived from the resources of human wisdom; and be also aware of the strong propensity in human nature to swerve from the express declarations of the divine word, and bring down the standard of salvation to the convenience or the caprice of its own corrupt inclinations.

To be furnished, then, against all doubt and uncertainty on so near a concern as our everlasting existence, ought surely to be considered a great blessing, and a ground of the deepest thankfulness, by every rational being; and should form the only foundation of their hope, and of their duties under those hopes. But while this will no doubt be admitted by all who hear me, I fear it must also be admitted, that this heaven-granted help to our severest necessity, has not been thus generally applied; that very few, comparatively speaking, have so brought their personal condition to this standard, as to have formed their expectations for hereafter solely upon what it makes known to all as the fixed and unchangeable determination of the Ruler of the Universe in dispensing the rewards and the punishments of eternity.

It is a near and an inevitable interest, my dear friends, to

which God calls your attention, and for which he hath made such wonderful provision, that it may be glorious to him and happy to you. But it can be so no otherwise than in conformity with those great principles of his moral government, revealed in his word, which shall exhibit him to the universe of men and angels, "glorious in holiness and excellent in mercy;" long suffering and gracious to a race of sinners, yet inexorable against sin persisted in, against the honor of his law, and the manifestation of his love. God cannot save sinners, who die such. Salvation must be wrought out in the present life, by a death unto sin and new birth unto righteousness; and fruits meet for repentance and faith must manifest the reality of those evangelical graces in our conversation in this world, if we hope for their reward in another state of being. This is the clear and reasonable doctrine of the religion which the Son of God taught in person, and which the Holy Ghost hath recorded in the Scriptures of truth, for our learning.

Yet clear and reasonable as it is, what multitudes in the present day, as at the beginning, venture to overlook or to disregard this authority, and to risk eternity, either with no preparation, or with a false or hypocritical one. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord! Lord!" Many will be ready and desirous to acknowledge Christ the Judge, who could not be prevailed upon to confess the crucified Jesus before the world. "Many will say to me in that day—Lord, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." Many will be desirous to claim an alliance with the King of heaven upon the unimproved privileges of Christian birth, or the mere profession of an unfruitful faith. "Many will say to me in that day—Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?" Many who call themselves his ministers, will be confident of being recognized by the great Head of the Church, in the day of judgment, upon false pretences to, and corrupt departure from, his pure and undefiled religion as it was taught and practised by his blessed apostles. But my text tells us it will be in vain. The description is sadly prophetic, my brethren, of the awful consequences of those corruptions and

divisions which deform and impede the gospel. And my text is the warning which now addresses itself to me and to you, lest that day come upon us with a false profession and an unfounded hope, unprovided to abide its trial and escape its doom. But it is not only the warning, it is the direction also, to shun the danger, and escape the ruin, which it denounces alike against the careless and the presumptuous.

"Not every one that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven."

In discoursing on which words, I shall endeavor to explain, in the

FIRST place, what we are to understand by the words, "Not every one that saith unto me, LORD, LORD."

SECONDLY, what is meant by our Saviour's expression of men's "entering into the kingdom of heaven."

THIRDLY, I shall inquire what qualification must be possessed by those who shall be admitted to enter in; and, then,

CONCLUDE with an application of the subject.

I. First, I am to explain what we are to understand by the words, "Not every one that saith unto me, LORD, LORD."

As the words of my text were spoken at the close of that divine summary of Christian doctrine and practice, contained in our Saviour's Sermon on the mount, they evidently refer us, as well as those to whom they were spoken, to the trial and proof of all religious condition, in the standard of the gospel. They are, therefore, addressed to all those to whom the gospel is offered, and to whom, thereby, life and immortality are brought to light; but more particularly to those who in any manner rely on the LORD JESUS CHRIST for acceptance with GOD. The whole text is prospective in its bearing, and points us forward to that day when "GOD will judge the secrets of men by JESUS CHRIST, according to the gospel;" and the supreme importance of an interest in him will be so manifest, that every semblance, even, of a knowledge of him or of his religion, will be resorted to, as a refuge against despair.

By calling our Saviour LORD, we acknowledge him to be the CHRIST, the Son of GOD, which should come into the world, thereby admitting his authority as a divine teacher, and owning the truth and obligation of his religion. But as

this acknowledgment of CHRIST necessarily includes observance of his institutions and example, the words under consideration are an enforcement of this obligation upon all who thus acknowledge him as LORD, with a plain declaration implied, that otherwise it will profit them nothing. "Why call ye me LORD, and do not the things which I say?" These words in the text, therefore, are equivalent to the declaration —Not every one who is born in a Christian land, and received into the visible Church by baptism—not every one who makes an external profession of religion—not every nominal or pretended believer in Christianity—shall thereby be entitled to the rewards of my kingdom. These, indeed, are all required of those who call me LORD, and are profitable, as means to an end; but without the end they are but as leaves on the fig tree. The belief of religious truth, if it goes no further—if it produces no fruits, no corresponding effects upon the life, is a barren, useless thing; it is dead, being alone. This, therefore, says our LORD, will be no recommendation to my favor; to complete the Christian character, and fit you for the inheritance of the saints, more substantial proofs of faith and holiness are required than the mere accidental advantages of birth and education, or the mere profession of religion. This may easily exist, and even be found prominent, in the midst of inordinate affections, unsubdued lusts, unhumbled pride, and unholy lives. But into my kingdom, no unclean thing can enter; neither whatsoever worketh abomination or loveth a lie.

These are the words to be understood and applied by all under the gospel: a conclusion which is confirmed by the very purpose of religion, independently of any special declaration, and, therefore, to be the more seriously considered in every investigation of spiritual condition. Yet, as our blessed Redeemer knew the prevailing propensity of our fallen nature to put words for things, and to substitute form for substance; as he also knew with what unwearied assiduity the great enemy of GOD and man would work for the corruption of the truth, and, even through the semblance of religion, seduce multitudes from the simplicity and certainty of the gospel; therefore did he warn them beforehand, that nothing short of the genuine fruit of the gospel, obtained through the opera-

tion of the HOLY GHOST upon the heart, and manifested in the present life by a holy conversation in the world, would secure his acknowledgment of them as his true disciples, in the great day of eternity. "Not every one that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

II. Secondly, I am to explain what is meant by our Saviour's expression of men's "entering into the kingdom of heaven."

The words "kingdom of heaven," and "kingdom of GOD," are used in Scripture to express, sometimes the visible Church or communion of saints upon earth, and sometimes the kingdom of glory in a future state. In the present connexion there can be no doubt as to which of these our LORD refers in the text. By entering into this kingdom, then, we must understand the being adjudged worthy of a reward of eternal life, and as this necessarily leads the thoughts to realize the trial we have to undergo at the tribunal of CHRIST, it serves to impress more powerfully upon the heart the necessity of that circumspection and earnestness, that diligence and faithfulness, in all our duties, without which there can be no good hope of being permitted to enter in.

Few things, my brethren, are better calculated to beget a false estimate of religious condition, than to entertain in the imagination expectations of a future happiness without a distinct reference to a future judgment. When the mind is excited with high wrought descriptions of the glories of heaven, or with high wrought imaginations of what awaits the righteous in the kingdom of GOD—when the practice prevails of dwelling upon this subject almost exclusively either in public or in private, and professors of religion are snatched, as it were, from death to glory, overlooking the awful trial which must precede it—the sober duties of the gospel are forgotten, and no relish is entertained for any thing in religion, unless as it is calculated to uphold the delusion of a mind whose judgment is mastered by its feelings, and thereby incapacitated, certainly for the time, most probably at all times, for the reasonable service of redeemed beings to GOD and to each other. Therefore, as our entrance into the kingdom of heaven will depend altogether on the judgment to be passed by a heart-searching GOD on the deeds done in the

body, the constant recollection of this truth is the great preservative against the danger of an extravagant and unfounded hope, derived from feelings casually excited.

It is this thought, my brethren and hearers, which brings the conduct, the actions, and motives of the man, rather than his language and his feelings, under examination. It is this thought which solemnizes the high expectation of a heavenly inheritance, and causes its entertainer to feel jealous lest he deceive himself; and which tempers the rejoicing, even of the righteous, with reverence and godly fear. And it is this thought which, by habitually connecting the reward with the duties to which it is promised, presents at once the most powerful motives to perform them, and the highest assurance of being counted worthy to enter in through the gates into the heavenly Jerusalem. "Not every one that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

III. Thirdly, I am to inquire what qualifications must be possessed by those who shall be admitted to enter in.

Our Saviour's declaration in the text is the full and satisfactory answer to this all-important inquiry, my brethren—He that doeth the will of GOD as revealed in his word. This answer, however short, comprehends all that wisdom can teach or life can practice, and is the sole condition on which the hope of eternal life can safely be entertained.

There can be no question, then, either as to the duty or as to the necessity of acquainting ourselves with that will, and of following exactly what it prescribes; bringing our religious profession, our conduct as Christians, and our hope towards GOD, to the appointments, declarations, and example of his revealed word, as the only and the infallible standard of his holy will.

Now, though this is certainly within the compass of the ability which GOD giveth, and in itself easy—or he would not require it of all who are favored with the gospel—nevertheless, such is the situation of the Christian world through corruption of doctrine and division of order, that the truth is obscured and difficulty greatly increased in ascertaining what that will of GOD is, which must be followed and obeyed in order to salvation. Yet as this unhappy state of things can-

not absolve from the obligation to inquire diligently what his will is, it should surely operate to increase the caution with which modern systems of divine truth are received and relied upon as the will of GOD; and this the rather, not only because we are warned against it in the word itself, but because, in the whole extent of that word, there is not so much as a hint that sincerity in error will render a mistaken view of the will of GOD, and the erroneous conduct consequent thereon, acceptable to him and available to salvation. Whatever, therefore, may be reasoned by men on this ground, is a gratuitous assumption of what GOD hath not revealed, and we may boldly say, could not reveal without thereby vacating the whole purpose of the Bible as the infallible standard of his holy will to fallen sinners. "Many shall come in my name, saying, I am CHRIST, and shall deceive many, but go ye not after them; for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect. Behold I have told you before."

The great purpose of the gospel, and the declared will of GOD, being the sanctification of corrupt and sinful creatures, in order to fit them for future happiness, this qualification must be obtained, or there can be no just hope of acceptance with GOD. But as no man can sanctify himself, in the proper sense of the word, as no fallen sinner can change his own heart, and renew the image of GOD in his own soul or in the soul of another, it is the will of GOD that all men should have recourse to the means of grace provided for this end, in and through the LORD JESUS CHRIST. He that would be saved, therefore, in the great day of eternity, must, in the present life, receive and believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as he is offered to sinners in the gospel. He must repent and forsake his sins, according to the conditions of the baptismal covenant in and by which he is made a member of CHRIST, a child of GOD, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven; and as in this new relation to GOD all the helps and privileges of the covenant of grace are conferred upon him, he is required, and does therein engage, to lead a new life, following the commandments of GOD. In which, if he persevere to the end, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of the LORD and

Saviour JESUS CHRIST, his title to the heavenly reward is acknowledged by the Judge, he is owned as a good and faithful servant, and enters into the joy of his LORD.

But in point of fact, few or none do in this wise fulfil their baptismal engagement; for the privileges therein conferred are forfeited by personal sin. Yet where men might justly have been left without remedy, GOD, even the most merciful GOD, who knows whereof we are made, how frail and corrupt sin hath made us, and what powerful temptations are presented by the world, the flesh, and the devil, hath fitted this dispensation of his mercy and grace to our fallen and infirm condition; and in the grant of repentance and renewed obedience to all who have thus sinned, provides for their conversion and restoration to his favor, through the prevailing intercession of his only begotten Son; and through faith in him, accepts them as righteous, and entitled to all the privileges and hopes of his adopted children. But the penitent thus restored must continue faithful, otherwise he incurs the awful risk of abandonment by the SPIRIT of grace, being delivered over to the mastery of his own corruptions without restraint, and of being consigned to destruction as utterly incorrigible.

The qualifications for eternal life, then, are repentance towards GOD and faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, professed by embracing the gospel, and evidenced by the fruits of faith in all holy conversation and godliness of life; persisted in to the end as a faithful member of CHRIST's mystical body, the Church which he bought with his own blood, and for which he gave himself that he might cleanse it from all pollution, and present it to GOD a glorious Church, purified from the defilement of sin, and renewed in holiness. This purpose the faithful Christian has ever before him; he looks to the end—to the account he has to give in, to the Judge who shall assign his everlasting condition. These quicken and strengthen him "to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts" of a fallen, corrupt nature; to "put off the body of the sins of the flesh;" "to cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of GOD;" and "to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS." Great and manifest imperfection, yea even

sin, cleaves to his best services; he feels that they are nothing worth in the eye of unspotted purity and holiness, that he is in himself an unprofitable servant. But he looks unto JESUS, to the promises of GOD in him, to the merit of his righteousness, and to the atoning virtue of his blood. Faith presents these continually to GOD, and hope looks forward with humble confidence to the reward of grace in the "well done, good and faithful servant," with which his LORD and his Judge shall confess him before his Father and the holy angels. "Not every one that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

The application of this awful subject, and of what I have said upon it, brings home to our consideration, my brethren and hearers, the true design and purpose of the religion of the gospel, in preparing sinful creatures for everlasting happiness in the kingdom of GOD, by the renewal and sanctification of their corrupt natures in the present life. This alone, if duly considered, might give an importance to time, distinct from every worldly consideration; and "teach us so to number our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom"—might rescue this precious talent from the sinful vanities and idolatrous pursuits of the world, and devote it to the higher interests of our eternal state. How, then, let us ask ourselves, are we prepared for the awful solemnity represented in my text? My dear hearers, "we must all stand before the judgment seat of CHRIST;" from this there is no escape for any; and we know not how soon death may seal us up to the judgment of that day, and put repentance and hope for ever beyond our reach. Shall any, then, continue to trifle with this tremendous uncertainty, and, in the wantonness of defiance, provoke GOD to surrender them to impenitence? GOD forbid! Rather let it quicken us all, according to our several conditions, to "search and try our ways," and bring our hope, whatever it may be, to the standard of GOD'S revealed will; for this it is which alone can correct error and give assurance to truth, and by which we all shall be judged.

Let professors of religion, especially, bring their hope to this standard; not in part only, but in the whole of its foundation and superstructure. Let them open their Bibles, and

then trace, step by step, their conformity with the will and command of Almighty God. Let them open their hearts, and there search for the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit. Let them inspect their lives, and, from the fruit thence yielded, judge whether the tree is made good. To them, in particular, is the warning of my text addressed. They are the persons who call Christ Lord; and he therein affectionately cautions them against the shame and ruin of being by him disowned before God.

And let those who have hitherto turned a deaf ear to the counsel of God, who have smothered the voice of conscience, and stifled the convictions of the Holy Spirit in their hearts; who are yet surrounded with the goodness of God, and certified by the gospel, that "He hath not appointed them to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ;" who must also be judged by the word spoken unto them—Let them awake to the warning of my text, and ask themselves what preparation is made for the day of the Lord, by doing the will of God? O let them bring the levity and thoughtlessness in which their day of life and grace is fast vanishing away, to the judgment then to pass upon the deeds done in the body, and ask themselves—Is this what God requires of me that I may be saved? Think a moment, my fellow sinners, of what God hath done for your salvation, and of what you have done in return for his love. Think of the awful hour when you must give account of yourselves, to Him who made and redeemed you, for the improvement of this and all his other mercies. And, O think, what horror and despair will seize upon you above all others, when that merciful Saviour who poured out his life to save you from hell, shall be compelled to disown you; when your then earnest Lord, Lord, shall meet no answer from infinite love, but "Depart from me, I never knew you!" O try to realize this awful moment, till your sins become hateful and burdensome, and the cross of Christ your only refuge from the wrath of that day. Now it is given unto you by the long-suffering mercy of God to cry effectually, "Lord, I come to thee, thou hast the words of eternal life;" "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief;" "Lord, save or I perish!" And now it is given to Christ to say to you, "Him that cometh unto

me I will in no wise cast out;" "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee, go and sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee." But then, all this, now so freely offered you in CHRIST JESUS, will be done away. As your Judge, CHRIST will know nothing but your works and your words—the temper of your souls, and the fruit of your doings; and according to the record of your life must the everlasting sentence be passed.

O that a gracious GOD may impress these solemn truths upon all your hearts, and bring your lives under their blessed influence. O that he would write in all our hearts the unalterable appointment of his wisdom, in bringing sinners to salvation by the cross of CHRIST; that if we would be happy hereafter we must become holy here: that if we would enter into the kingdom of heaven we must do the will of GOD upon earth, as revealed to us in the gospel of his Son JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

SERMON XXVI.

THE DUTY OF PROFESSORS OF RELIGION.

Titus iii. 8.

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.

Could any reasonable doubt be entertained of the obligation Christians are under to adorn their profession by a walk and conversation in the world conformed to the gospel of Christ, the strong terms in which the apostle here presses upon Titus the duty of insisting upon this point in his public preaching, might serve to correct it, and to warn all professing Christians, that religion without the practice of its duties is no other than the building on the sand, which will be swept away in the day of trial, and confound the expectations of its deluded entertainer. At the first view of the subject, it would seem next to impossible that rational beings could so overlook the great purpose and design of religion as to satisfy themselves, or to imagine its Divine Author can be satisfied, with an empty profession of faith. Yet the Scriptures themselves and our own experience concur in proving, that it is not only a possible, but a very frequent delusion, to substitute the form for the power of godliness. It is the bent and bias of our fallen nature, my brethren and hearers, to decline from the strait and narrow way of holiness—to pare down the duties of religion to the standard of our own interest and convenience—to search for excuses to uphold some conformity with the world, and by making Christ the minister of sin, to make void, as to ourselves, the gracious purpose of his merciful undertaking for a world of sinners. This the apostle well knew, and, therefore, charged Titus in such strong terms to press upon his hearers the necessity of a holy life, in order to reap any benefit from a right faith. "This is a faithful saying;" that is, it is not only true, but a truth of such leading

importance as to pervade the whole structure of Christianity, and to give to the hope derived from the gospel the character of "sure and certain," or of false and unfounded; therefore, says he, "I will that thou affirm this constantly." St. Paul had also experienced how prone men are to corrupt the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith without works. He knew how readily the corrupt heart and clouded understanding of a fallen race would seize upon an abstract point in a system of religion, and build upon it the fatal delusions of antinomian error. He, therefore, enjoins it upon Titus to guard against this evil, and in the exercise of his public ministry to enforce upon all believers the obligation of good works, not only as a distinct doctrine of the religion he was commissioned to teach, but as the only evidence of a true and saving faith.

The union of a right faith and a holy life, therefore, being the only ground of a good hope to the believer, and in order to impress upon those who make a profession of religion the necessity of maintaining all such good works as God hath prepared for them to walk in, in discoursing upon these words I will, in the

First place, explain in what sense the words "they which have believed in God" are to be understood and applied.

Secondly, I will consider the nature and kind of the "good works" by them to be maintained.

Thirdly, I shall point out the obligations which are necessarily undertaken by all who make a profession of religion; and, then,

Conclude with some practical observations.

"This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works."

I. First, I am to explain in what manner the words "they which have believed in God" are to be understood and applied.

It must be evident, I think, my brethren and hearers, that to any just and practical application of divine truth, it is exceedingly necessary that the terms and figures made use of in Scripture to describe the effects produced by the preaching of the gospel under an extraordinary and miraculous dispensation of religion, should be carefully accommodated to

the very different circumstances of the same religion, and of the persons to whom it is preached, when miraculous attestation is withdrawn.

This accommodation, however, ought only to be applied to the manner in which a particular doctrine, or its effects, are exhibited by the inspired writers, and never to the doctrine itself or to the effect, as universally necessary. Thus, the doctrine of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners and of the witness of the Spirit in believers, as exhibited in the Scriptures under an extraordinary dispensation of the Holy Ghost, to be practically useful, must be accommodated to the circumstances of a dispensation in which only his ordinary operations are to be looked for and obtained; while the doctrines themselves are to be enforced as equally indispensable now as at the beginning. For sinners must yet be converted or perish, and there is no power which can change the heart and communicate spiritual life but God the Holy Ghost.

But, however obvious this accommodation must be, and even essential to the just exhibition and practical application of revealed truth under the present state of the gospel, there is one particular in religious condition to which no difference, either of state or dispensation, admits of any accommodation. Both Heathen and Christian men must believe the gospel if they would be considered as believing in God.

The gospel is his message to mankind by his only begotten Son. It is his testimony in the world to and of his only begotten Son, as the sole medium of his mercy and favor to men, and it is by him "commanded to be preached among all nations for the obedience of faith." Whosoever, therefore, receiveth not the gospel, believeth not God; and the Scripture declares of every such person, in its severest language, that "he hath made God a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."

The expression in my text, then, "they which have believed in God," being the designation given by St. Paul to those who, from among the Heathen, turned to the Lord by embracing the conditions of the gospel, must be understood and applied by us exclusively to those persons who, in like manner, by a public profession of faith in Christ, and by an open

union with his visible Church, do show to the world that they have so believed in GOD, as he by his holy word requires them to believe. This was the evidence given by the first converts to the religion of the gospel. This was the only distinction between being of the world and being of GOD, known to the apostles of CHRIST. There was then no middle or neutral ground, like the abstract, naked belief of so many in these days; but every believer was openly professed, was in full communion with the Church, and was, therefore, only accounted a believer because he thus "continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Therefore, the same evidence must now determine whether we are of the number which have believed in GOD, or of those who falsify the testimony he hath given by his only begotten Son, as the Saviour of the world.

II. Secondly, I am to consider the nature and kind of good works by them to be maintained.

It is a maxim of CHRIST'S religion that "no man liveth to himself;" and though this is primarily to be taken, as the apostle teaches, of the account we have to give in to GOD, as our LORD and master, it is also true of the mutual dependence on each other, in which men are placed in the present life, and of the consequent effects which the conduct of one may produce upon the welfare and happiness of many. Hence, as religion is the substitute which the wisdom of GOD hath devised, to supply the place of that original rectitude which the entertainment of sin expelled from the heart of man, the good works to be maintained by those which have believed in GOD, or who profess to be regulated by the laws of his religion, must be of such nature and kind as are both pleasing to GOD, by being directly religious, and profitable also to men, because contributing to the peace, comfort, and welfare of the world.

"They which have believed in GOD," therefore, will be careful to maintain the good work of cultivating the spirit of his religion in their hearts, by the study of his holy word, by meditating upon his glorious perfections, and by the frequent exercise of prayer. These are means which his wisdom hath devised and directed, to correct and transform the corruption of our hearts, to renew his image in our souls, and prepare

us for the glory and happiness of his heavenly kingdom; and they are effectual to this end, through his promised blessing on their use. For what better safe-guard against those "evil thoughts which assault and hurt the soul," than to keep the heart occupied with meditations of GOD? What safer preventive against the entertainment of sin, than the recollection and sobriety of mind which the exercise of private prayer calls for? And what so effectual to promote growth in grace, as thus to cherish the Divine SPIRIT with habitual devotion? For thus runs the promise, "to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundance."

"They which have believed in GOD," will likewise be careful to maintain the good work of the public worship of GOD, by their personal presence in the house of the LORD; that they may join with their brethren in those holy exercises by which GOD is glorified, the Church edified, and faith increased.

"I was glad when they said unto me let us go into the house of the LORD," is the language in which David expressed his delight in the public duties of religion; and a portion of the same spirit fills the heart of the devout Christian. When the holy day comes round and invites him to the high privilege of its sacred appointments, he is not of the number of those who, for some slight obstruction or trifling inconvenience to himself, "forsake the assembling of themselves together" with their brethren. Particularly when the great sacrifice for sin is commemorated, is his soul alive to the mighty benefits procured for us by the same, and his spirit drawn out to be made one with Him "who loved us and gave himself for us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

Thus, in the exercise of public and private devotion, and in the use of the sacrament of CHRIST'S body and blood as a means of grace to the soul, "they which have believed in GOD" are careful to maintain all such good works as he hath prepared for them to walk in, that they may thereby maintain that good work which GOD hath begun in their hearts by his HOLY SPIRIT, and reap that bright reward which he hath promised to their faith and obedience in his holy word.

"They which have believed in GOD" will also be careful to maintain such good works as are profitable to men, not only by avoiding all actions directly injurious to others, but by

the performance of all such within their ability as are either useful, beneficial, or consolatory, to their brethren, their friends, and neighbors, and all others in reach of their good offices.

The Christian, then, will be a man of integrity. And,

First, he will be just to himself; he will follow no calling or occupation which puts in danger the care of his soul. He will be just to his family, with industry and care providing for their needful support and advancement in life. As he hath covenanted for them with GOD and before men, he will honestly perform the promise and vow he hath publicly undertaken. He will, therefore, "train them up in the nurture and admonition of the LORD," carefully instilling the principles of religion and virtue, and diligently watching against and correcting the buddings of sin, both in temper and conduct. As his children have renounced the world through him as their surety, he will neither lead them into its vanities by his example, nor expose them to its dissipations by his indulgence. From his instructions they will early learn that the world which surrounds them "lieth in wickedness," alienated from GOD; that its pleasures and its profits are the snares in which souls are taken captive by the ruler of its darkness, and that their safety consists in keeping away from the blandishment of its temptations; by his prudence, active employment will leave no vacancy for its follies to fill up, and with the promised blessing of GOD on these faithful endeavors, their ears will be open to receive instruction, and their hearts to retain wisdom.

Secondly, the Christian will be just to all men. Whatever his calling may be, diligence, truth, and uprightness will preside over all his conduct. His treasure not being on earth, the frauds and extortions by which "they that will be rich fall into a snare;" and the maxims of gain, which the convenient morality of the world sanctions, present no temptation to him to violate the higher law by which his life is governed. The Christian, the believer in GOD, looks habitually to the end, he realizes the continual inspection of an all seeing eye; and bearing ever in mind the impressive question, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"—he finds it a shield and a buckler against

every inducement to unrighteous gain, and over engagement with the things which perish.

Thirdly, the Christian will be merciful to all men.

As the object and the subject of the highest mercy in his own person, the constant sense of this, under which he lives, prompts his heart to feel and to manifest benevolence, compassion, and kindness to every creature of God. Being himself forgiven his ten thousand talents, he retains not the hundred-pence offences of his fellow servants; but, in the exercise of forgiveness, walks at liberty from the slavery of false honor, and the galling chains of pride, hatred, and revenge. Particularly with the unfortunate and the afflicted does he feel himself drawn out to sympathize, and moved to contribute to their relief. But if he can do nothing more, he "weeps with those who weep," and tries to soften and assuage the distress he cannot remove, by sharing in their grief. Because "charity seeketh not her own," the Christian pushes not his rights to extremity, the bitter tear of the widow and the fatherless is not made to flow more grievously through his exactions. Having learnt what that meaneth, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," no ruin is accomplished under his hand; and, where the hardness of the world brings it to pass, he commits the case to Him who judgeth righteously, and "whose tender mercies are over all his works."

Fourthly, the Christian will be liberal to all men.

His compassion will not be allowed to evaporate in the mere expression of pity, but will show itself by such fruits of active benevolence as the blessing of God has put at his disposal. And, if he is a Christian indeed, the luxury of this duty will not be denied him for want of means. Something will be reserved, even from his own accommodation, if no otherwise to be had, wherewith to relieve the indigent, to assist the destitute, above all—because comprehending all charities in one—above all, to set forward the grand remedy for the miseries of this life, in the advancement of the pure and undefiled religion of the gospel. This is near the heart of the true Christian, both as promoting the glory of God and insuring the good of men not only now but for ever. And did professing Christians but feel and understand as they should do their duty in this respect; did they sacrifice less

to custom and more to principle; did they but estimate the souls that are perishing all around them for lack of knowledge; did they reflect on the rich interest which would be retributed to their own souls in thus caring for the souls of others, they would surely turn what is wasted on the vanities of the world into this channel, and make glad the city of GOD with their liberality, whilst they also "laid up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come," in the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is GOD." But these very things the true Christian provides for, by repressing inordinate desires, by interdicting extravagant expenditure, and by putting forth diligence and industry in his occupation. These are means which GOD has put in the reach of all Christians, and has warned them to "make to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness;" for on this will depend their being counted worthy of the true riches.

Such, my brethren, are the "good works" which Titus was commanded to affirm constantly, that they which have believed in GOD should be "careful to maintain." And surely the religion whose true purpose and genuine fruit it is to promote the glory of GOD by doing good to our fellow creatures, from a principle of love and obedience to him, must commend itself not only to Christians, but to all who can feel for human misery or desire human happiness.

III. Thirdly, I am to point out the obligations which are necessarily undertaken by all who make a profession of religion.

A profession of religion, properly understood, means the declared intention to devote the life to the service of GOD, according to the directions given in the gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. And whether this be done from the conviction of the understanding that it is the primary duty of every accountable being, to whom the offer of the gospel is made, forthwith to embrace it, or from any series of impressions and effects previously produced, makes no difference as to the obligations undertaken.

The first obligation undertaken by those who make a profession of religion is, to forsake and abandon all known sin, that is, all acts, habits, and pursuits forbidden by the law of GOD.

The great object of religion being the defeat and destruc-

tion of sin, and the high purpose wherefore CHRIST came in the flesh being to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," those who profess to believe in GOD are bound by the highest considerations to watch against every temptation to sin, and to resist its commission, whatever may be the consequence. As sin is in positive opposition to every perfection of the divine nature, and is absolutely inconsistent with the present and future happiness of moral beings, and the whole purpose of the present life being the extinguishment of its love in our hearts, and of its practice in our lives, the religion through which all this is to be effected cannot permit the entertainment of sin in those who profess to be governed by its holy laws. "They which have believed in GOD," therefore, do by their profession undertake to renounce all the sinful acts, habits, and pursuits of their former lives, with whatever directly, or by discoverable consequence, involves the commission of sin.

In the next place, those who make a profession of religion do undertake to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

The purpose of religion being to prepare sinners for heavenly happiness and eternal glory, it is indispensably necessary to this end, not only that the love of sin should be rooted out, but that they should acquire those opposite tempers and dispositions of soul which form the character of holiness. GOD being essentially holy, all who aspire to the enjoyment of his everlasting presence must also become holy. And this holiness being to be obtained in the use of means by him prescribed, it is to the use of those means that professors of religion bind themselves, and it is in the use of those means that they do actually become holy and heavenly minded persons. GOD, indeed, can confer holiness by an instantaneous transformation of the soul; but it is not thus that he deals with moral beings. He gives them the means of becoming holy, and assists them by his SPIRIT in the faithful use of them; but he requires them, and for this very reason, to work out their own salvation, by leading sober, righteous, and godly lives, as becometh their profession of faith in his holy word.

To live soberly, is to maintain that recollected, serious deportment, which so high an interest as heavenly happiness,

committed to so corrupt and feeble a creature as the Christian knows and feels himself to be, ought to produce. The thought of how much is at stake, of the means by which it has been made possible to be saved, of the awful consequences of failure, as they must be frequent in the mind of the Christian, so must they necessarily beget that habit of watchfulness and circumspection which constitutes sobriety of life. This duty, however, is not confined to the general or prevailing deportment of the external conduct; it applies also to the regulation of the appetites, passions, and affections of the soul. These are all disordered and out of rule by the infection of sin, and are to be restrained and governed, mortified and subdued, to the control and direction of God's holy law. They are also to be renewed and elevated to the high purpose for which they were originally given, by being directed to God, accustomed to submit to his holy will, encouraged to trust in his faithful promises, and exalted to hope for his eternal presence as the full satisfaction of their capacity for enjoyment.

This is an arduous task, my brethren; but it is what every professor of religion has undertaken and must accomplish, if he would gain "the prize of his high calling." But he is not called to it in his own weakness, but in the strength of the living God, who exhorts him to live soberly, to watch diligently, and to strive faithfully, because "it is God which worketh in him both to will and to do." A sufficient measure of divine grace is bestowed upon every man, to enable him to believe and come to God, and upon every true believer, sufficient to all required duty; and in the power of this grace all things are possible to him that believeth.

To live soberly, requires from the Christian professor a distinct separation from the deportment of the world in all those things which mark its ungodliness. The world, my brethren, is unholy, and Christians are called to come out of it. Its pomps and its vanities, its lusts and its pleasures, are inconsistent with all sobriety of mind. Even its more innocent pleasures and amusements can seldom be partaken of without the painful retrospect of mercies misapplied, without the sad experience that the soul is less inclined to hold its accustomed intercourse with God, or less lively in its ad-

dresses to a throne of grace. Yet the sobriety of Christian deportment is neither inconsistent with or opposed to cheerfulness and enjoyment. Christian society has its pleasures as well as the society of the world, with this marked advantage, that those who are qualified to enjoy them are not only made happy for the time, but better and happier for the time to come. And when this can be said for the social parties of the world, those who have undertaken to live soberly, as professors of religion, may, without danger or offence, be found among them; but not till then.

To live righteously, is to do unto others as we would they should do unto us. This is the rule given by our Saviour to his disciples, as comprehending the three great principles of morality—truth, justice, and charity. And it is called the golden rule, not only because of its intrinsic and comprehensive wisdom, as the foundation of moral obligation among men, but because it makes our own wants and desires the measure of our charity and benevolence to others.

As no man can possibly wish to be deceived, defrauded, or defamed, every man is bound, by that very circumstance, to perform all the offices of truth and justice towards other men, doing no injury to any, in his person, character, or estate. And as every man, when in distress, must wish to be relieved, according to the nature of his suffering, he is thereby bound to afford relief and assistance to others, in the same manner, to the extent of his ability.

This obligation every professor of religion specially undertakes, and on his fulfilment of it depends the worth of his profession, both here and hereafter. As human laws cannot enforce the duties of benevolence, the divine law enacts them as a branch of moral righteousness, and hath expressly declared that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

To live godly, is to add to sobriety of deportment and righteousness of life the governing principle of the reverence and love of Almighty God. Acting from motives derived from him, and ending in him; referring continually to his holy will; depending wholly on his heavenly grace for direction and support; hoping for and relying on his promised mercy, solely through the merits and death of the Lord Je-

sus Christ, and manifesting this principle by a professed subjection to the gospel, by the regular and hearty performance of all the public and private duties of religion, and by bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth, in the life;—this is the holiness to which Christians are called, which they profess to desire and to seek for, and "without which no man shall see the Lord."

Such are the good works which Titus, and all other ministers of Christ after him, was directed to affirm constantly, that "they which have believed in God" should be careful to maintain. And, in the explanation and enforcement of the text which I have laid before you, "ye see your calling," my brethren, and you learn the obligations you have come under as professors of religion. You learn also, the unspeakable consequences which depend on the faithful performance of them. As communicants, those obligations have lately again been renewed, and I conceived it my duty to recall your attention to them.

Make them, then, the subject of your most serious consideration, and bring them to bear faithfully on your spiritual condition. Apply them particularly to two points in it. The one, the state of your heart in its private exercises and aspirations after God. Are you in this faithful to yourselves, cherishing the seed of divine grace in your hearts, by frequent prayer, and meditation in the divine word? Are you thankful, drawn out in praise for the divine mercies? Are you watchful, awake to the stirrings of sin in your hearts, and diligent to resist and drive away the temptation? The other point is, your compliance with customs and practices of the world which cannot be reconciled with a fervent spirit of piety, and with that separation from its vanities to which you are pledged. Do you comply with them? Do you comply from choice, or from constraint of some kind? Do you derive satisfaction or mortification from the compliance? These inquiries will enable you to "prove your own selves," and form a good ground of confidence and hope, or will call for penitence and amended life. And great thanks be to God, his ear is ever open to the cry of the penitent, and his hand ready to send him deliverance.

The great danger of the present times consists in a general

propensity to lower the standard of religious duty and attainment, and to spread out the hope of the gospel so widely as to cover much in Christian conduct and in Christian condition, that neither the letter or the spirit of the gospel will warrant. This renders it the more necessary that those who make a profession of religion should increase their watchfulness over themselves, and over their brethren; lest this ruinous deceit find countenance and support through their inadvertent compliance in things not directly sinful, perhaps, in themselves, yet evidently the occasion of much sin and erroneous opinion on the subject of religion, and certainly inconsistent with the duties, and obligations, and attainments, of those who profess to have believed in GOD on the faith of his revealed word. The Church of CHRIST is compared to a city set on an hill, and the members thereof to the light which makes it discoverable amidst the darkness of the world. But if this light itself become darkness, by the members gradually conforming to the ways and practices of the world, this purpose is defeated; and Christians, by putting out the light, become the destroyers of their own hope. Therefore, my Christian brethren, as "ye are the body of CHRIST and members in particular, let *your* light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

SERMON XXVII.

DILIGENCE IN RELIGION.

2 Peter iii. 14.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Were I called upon to say what I considered most conducive to the formation of the religious character, I would unhesitatingly name serious consideration. And I think I am warranted in this from the actual condition of mankind, from the nature of religion, and the manner in which the communications of the gospel are made to us.

From the nature of man, fallen and depraved, he is chiefly attracted by present and sensible things. Their power and influence over him are very great, not only because of their subserviency to his present comfort and enjoyment, but because of his natural darkness, and ignorance of higher and still more lasting enjoyments. Yet is there upon the mind of this fallen and perverted creature a faint and obscure, yet anxious and uneasy, perception of things which are not the objects of sense; in which, nevertheless, he is deeply interested. Serious consideration, therefore, is the only thing which can enable him to form some just estimate of what he is most attracted by, and to give a clearer and more impressive character to those anxious interests which lie beyond the boundary of sense.

From the nature of religion also, serious consideration must enter into any safe or profitable examination of its importance to our present as well as future welfare. For religion is a science, even the science of eternal life, upon conditions declared by Almighty God, and proposed to our attainment. Without serious consideration, therefore, it cannot be understood; and, if not understood, will never be desired and followed as the one thing needful. Religion, moreover, is a reasonable service required from man by his Creator. It

must, therefore, be studied and treasured up in its information, its doctrines, its precepts, and its sanctions; and, though spiritual in its nature, it is made so to us, that is, we imbibe its spirit, through the instrumentality of means also proposed to be considered and applied by us.

From the manner in which the communications of the gospel are made to us, moreover, the necessity as well as advantage of serious consideration must be still more evident. For the gospel is in the nature of a proclamation or public message from a potentate to his subjects; and, as it embraces a great variety of matter as well as condition, and includes time that is past and time that is to come, as well as that now present, very careful attention is necessary to apprehend its connexion and bearing upon our individual interests.

Having also this public message recorded for our instruction, in such wise as to be equally authoritative with an audible delivery of its contents, the duty of acquainting ourselves with it is enforced by the readiness wherewith we may apply ourselves to this source of saving knowledge in divine things.

If serious consideration, then, is thus necessary and profitable to our entrance upon religion at all, it is equally so to our continuance in it with increase and advantage. As in all other sciences, we delight in them more as we become better acquainted with them, so it is in an especial manner with the science of religion. Its instruction is more deep, its discoveries more sublime, its results more certain: all its knowledge leads to a practical result, and a present reward, with this high distinction over all the rest, that this reward shall be increased and perpetuated in eternity.

That this serious consideration was recommended by our Lord and by his apostles, we learn from many passages in the gospels and epistles; and that it was practised by the primitive Christians, and particularly by those to whom St. Peter wrote this epistle, we learn from the context. From this it would appear, that meditations upon a future life, and upon the awful events of death and judgment, as preparatory to it, and bearing upon its condition for happiness or misery eternal, were the awakening and quickening considerations upon which their faith was fruitful in righteousness and true

holiness. Looking for a new heaven and a new earth, according to the promise of God, wherein righteousness only should dwell, they were anxious to secure a place in that kingdom; and the apostle's exhortation in my text is founded upon this principle, and calculated to encourage them to keep their minds fixed upon these realities as alone competent to counteract and overcome the deceits of sin and the ensnaring influence of temporal things. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

And do not the same things await us, my hearers? And do not some of us at least say in words, that we look for them? To deepen the impression, then, upon all our hearts, let us,

First, inquire into the particular events which occupy the thoughts of the people of God, that is, of all true Christians.

Secondly, into the effect of such necessary though oftentimes alarming and painful meditations; and, then,

Conclude, with a practical application of the subject.

I. First, to inquire into the particular events which occupy the thoughts of all true Christians.

First, then, they are looking for death; they expect it; they know it must come. In this they differ from the people of the world. Both, to be sure, are equally certain of death, but one entertains it as a certainty which is to be desired; the other, which is to be feared. Both, indeed, feel and own the natural reluctance to part with life, and even with its miseries; but in the one, the reluctance is overcome, even in the most timid, by the power of faith in the promises of God, certified and sealed in the resurrection of Christ; while in the other it is increased by these very considerations, deepening the certainty of the awful consequences which will follow after death. However a man may live in unbelief, and bid defiance to all the sanctions of religion and the dictates of reason, he cannot die an infidel. In that hour of truth and reality, there is no sporting with eternity, it has him by the hand, nor can all the sophisms of infidelity remove its never ending grasp.

By looking to this appointed end the Christian becomes familiar with it. Often does he, in thought, bring it all be-

fore him, and acts over his death as a scene through which he must pass; often is it so realized in the deep abstraction of his spirit, as hardly to be distinguished from the reality, until the mind reacts and returns him once more to the shadows of time—for such, indeed, they are, and never more truly considered as such than when coming back from such a contemplation. I know not, my brethren, that this was exactly St. Paul's meaning when he said to the Corinthians, "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in CHRIST JESUS our LORD, I die daily." But every true Christian must, more or less, have met the hour of his death in those solemn meditations which bring near the end of his faith and the enjoyment of his hope of immortality.

Being thus familiar with it, he prepares for it as for a necessary journey—he lays in those supplies, and provides those accommodations, which will enable him to pass through its dark valley with light and safety. His lamp lighted up at the promises of GOD's faithful word, shows him his Redeemer's footsteps, and guides him through its gloomy shadow to the bright uncreated light of his Father's presence. "The LORD is his shepherd, and is with him; therefore, he fears no evil."

In the serious contemplation of death, the Christian learns the true estimate of temporal things. He, therefore, holds them as accommodations of GOD's goodness to our present condition, and is thankful for his share of them. As they are to be accounted for as his Master's goods, he strives to be faithful in the management and diligent in the improvement of them. He, therefore, "so uses the world as not abusing it;" neither wasting it in reveling and dissipation, nor hoarding in anxious distrust or idolatrous love, but according to ability and opportunity he gives his LORD's money to the exchangers in the persons of the necessitous and suffering, "thus laying up a good foundation against the time to come, that he may lay hold on eternal life."

Above all, in the certainty of the event and the uncertainty of the time, seriously considered, the Christian learns that he "has here no continuing city." He therefore, considers himself as a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth, and is hastening his return to another and a better country. His

thoughts are at his home, with its loved society, its unspeakable enjoyments, its everlasting reward. In all that GOD hath done for him and wrought in him here, he hath a foretaste of the greater and better things which shall be conferred on him there. In the love of GOD in CHRIST JESUS he realizes the pledge of all needed mercy. In the cross of CHRIST, he sees justice satisfied, sin atoned for, and GOD reconciled. In the resurrection of JESUS, he sees death vanquished and "life and immortality brought to light." Thus delivered from the bondage created by the fear of death, he meets his last enemy without dismay, and asks him, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?"

Secondly, as the Christian is looking for death, it is because this is to him the commencement of another life. He is, therefore, looking for what must follow it, which St. Peter here calls "the coming of the day of GOD."

This is the day which shall finally determine the everlasting condition of men and angels for happiness or misery. It is, therefore, called the "day of GOD"—"the great and terrible day of the LORD"—"the day of GOD's vengeance;" because on that day the Almighty will vindicate the equity of all his ways and dealings with his creatures—because he will then "convince the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed," and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him; and because on that day he will execute his righteous vengeance in the perdition of ungodly men.

It is also called the last day, because it will be the last in which time will be measured by the revolution of the heavenly bodies. As the evening and the morning were the first day at the creation, so, in like manner, will the evening and the morning of this day be the last at the close of this world, and will usher in eternity. Then shall the sun set in darkness and the moon withdraw her light, the stars shall fall from heaven, and the heavens themselves being on fire shall be dissolved.

It is, moreover, called the day of judgment, because "GOD will then judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance to all men in that he hath raised him from the dead."

To this day the Christian knows that he must come; it is, therefore, much in his thoughts. The awful business then to be transacted, the infinite consequences then to follow, enter into his constant meditations. They are, indeed, solemn and heart-sinking subjects; but to the believer, the awe belonging to them is mixed up with a good hope, a joyful assurance, yea, in some, with a longing desire to come to it. "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." The power and grace of his Redeemer enable the Christian to contemplate even the terrors of the LORD in that day, without sinking under them. His power is almighty, his love is stronger than death, "and he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto GOD by him."

Thirdly, as death and judgment enter much into the meditations of the Christian, they necessarily lead him to the last particular to which he looks, and that is, "the rest which remaineth for the people of GOD."

This is that recompense of reward to which he is taught to look, in expectation of which he is encouraged to persevere, and in the enjoyment of which there will be no limit. Imagination, indeed, cannot measure it, nor language express it, yet it is securely laid up for those who seek it; it is rest with GOD—it is "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." It is "a crown of glory which the LORD, the righteous Judge, shall give to all them that love his appearing." It is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

II. Secondly, let us inquire into the effect of such necessary, though oftentimes alarming and painful, meditations.

I know of nothing, my brethren and hearers, so overwhelming to the mind of man, as the first discovery made to the sinner by the SPIRIT OF GOD, that he is exposed, through death, to the righteous judgment of GOD. There is a quality in this perception of divine things which cannot be described; it must be felt, and all who have experienced it, and now hear me, know that it is so. But it does not follow, as some very injuriously assert, that none have good ground to trust to, in their conversion to GOD, but such as have been extraordinarily awakened and turned round from sin; and I am

inclined to think that great injury has been done to the cause of religion by this erroneous view of the doctrine of conversion, because its tendency has been to cause men rather to look for the extraordinary than to use diligently the ordinary means of grace to this end. Now these ordinary means are the serious consideration, and the faithful application, of what God hath revealed for our information, and commanded for our observance. And we have but to ask ourselves, my friends, what we might reasonably expect from the discoveries of revelation honestly considered, to form some estimate of the great injury arising from this neglect. Let us but ask ourselves, my brethren, to what end God hath spoken, unless to inform his creatures? To what end hath he commanded, unless to require our obedience? And why are means provided, but that we should use them? On any other principle, the great superstructure of revelation is a nullity.

With this fixed in the mind, we may form some judgment of the effect which would be produced on the conscience of an out-breaking sinner, by the serious consideration of the consequences of death and judgment to himself, as set forth in the word of God. Can he entertain such meditations seriously, and yet retain his sins? Can he view himself as hourly exposed to eternal death, without alarm, without some attempt to escape from horrors which cannot be uttered? Can he see such a rich provision made for his recovery, pardon, and salvation, as the gospel is filled with, and not be drawn to make an effort to attain it? I hardly can think it. We are none of us so hardy as to prefer, seriously, perdition to salvation. I know there are thousands who have heard all these things, and are yet unaffected by them; but I also know that they have never formed the subject-matter of one hour's serious meditation, never have yet been formed into prayer, and therefore it is, that they are without effect. The word of God has not lost its quality of being "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." The means of grace have not lost their efficacy, nor has God withdrawn his promise to bless them in the use. But men have found out the fashion of doing without them, and vainly expect to obtain the end without the means. But until they obtain a crop without waiting and working for it, the expectation is equally vain on the subject of religion.

As, therefore, it must be evident that the effect would be favorable to all descriptions of men, did they but allow their thoughts to dwell with seriousness on the high interests of eternity, as revealed in the word of God, I would press upon all who have hitherto been negligent in this behalf, to ask themselves where it must end, and to reflect how every way inexcusable it is, in a rational being, to risk the sanctions of the gospel upon any other ground than a sincere and persevering effort to obtain its grace and secure its hope. Where this endeavor has been made and failed, then may its efficacy be doubted, and its use superseded; but not till then. In other words, when God is found forgetful of his promise to the striving soul, then may men be excused for turning away from the awakening truths of death and judgment, and for the neglect of those means of grace which are provided to give us the victory over death and a crown of eternal life.

Essential, my brethren, as the entertainment of these solemn truths is to our entrance upon religion at all; to our continuance in the strait and narrow way they are indispensable.

To counteract the ensnaring influence of the world and its deceits, encountering us at every stage and step of our journey, the faith of eternal things is alone competent. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." But faith will flag, will falter, will die away if not kept in continual exercise. "Forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto the things which are before, I press towards the mark," says St. Paul. In like manner let every Christian keep constantly before him the things which are not seen—which are above, where Christ ever liveth at the right hand of God. The same are the only effectual means to obtain the victory over ourselves and all other enemies. To be looking for the day of God; to step out of the body, as it were, and contemplate a burning world and blazing heavens; to see a new creation come forward, at the command of God, in which nothing sinful or unclean shall have place; to behold a lake of fire, in which all wickedness shall be confined in darkness and misery for ever, and to realize, that in one or the other of these must be his portion, quickens the Christian to make his calling and election sure. Thus the saints of old exercised themselves, my brethren. "Where-

fore, beloved, seeing ye also look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

I will now conclude with some practical reflections, as an application of the subject.

And is it so, my dear hearers, that in the midst of life we are in death, that death consigns us to judgment, and judgment to heaven or to hell for ever? Are we all certain that a few years more will be the utmost extent of the longest life among us, and are we all uncertain whether the next day, or even hour, may not close our account, and transmit us to the judgment? Are there no instances of sudden death in our memories, or have we an exemption from such a call? Can each of us call to mind some relation, friend, or neighbor, who not long since was with us, but is now in the world of spirits? How, then, ought such considerations to affect us. O look forward to that hour, and think, would you not wish to be ready? Would you then wish to look back on a life spent in vice and dissipation, in neglect of God and your soul? Would you then desire to find God not reconciled, your sins unpardoned, no Saviour sought unto? Yet what but this can be expected by all who neglect the gospel? "O that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end!"

Again, the day of God is drawing nearer and nearer, when the voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall call the dust of the earth to judgment. And must we all be there before the judgment seat of Christ, dear friends, young and old, rich and poor, bond and free, with no distinction but from our lives? Yes, we must all meet there, and receive according to the deeds done in this body. How, then, would we wish to be found of him in that day? In peace or at war? O remember, my dear hearers, that there is no neutral ground there: if we are not at peace with God, and that peace ratified here on earth, we are at war, and must be treated as enemies. And remember that no sinner ever found peace with God but through the Lord Jesus Christ, accepted as he is offered in the gospel, and received by faith. And where would you wish to be placed on that awful day? on the right hand or on the left? With what sentence to be greeted by

your Judge? "Depart from me ye cursed," or, "Come ye blessed?" Yet we shall all hear these mighty words, and feel the effect of them for ever. No repentance will then avail; no prayer will then be heard. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." "To-day, then, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Listen to the truth that would save you. Flee to the mercy that is not yet shut against your prayers. Entertain the solemn meditations of eternity, and learn that you are immortal, through mortality.

Lastly, a blessed, joyful, and glorious eternity with GOD in heaven, or a cursed, despairing, and everlasting perdition with devils and damned spirits in the torments of hell, await us all. What say we, then, to these things, my hearers? Have you a choice, a preference, and what is it? Have you asked yourselves the question? Have you considered it? Have you counted up what it is to be happy or miserable for ever? Or have you postponed it, as something at a great distance, and that does not concern you in the days while you can indulge in the propensities of the flesh, in the vanities of the world? "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and walk in the sight of thine eyes, and desires of thine heart. But know, that for all these things GOD will call thee into judgment." Or have you settled it upon the infidel principle, that GOD is too merciful to punish men for ever? Indeed, and how know you that? See you no punishment, no misery here, none that endures throughout the period of human life, and, therefore, may just as reasonably endure through another and an eternal existence? Oh! at what a tremendous risk will men try to be wise above what is written, and harden their hearts against the awful events of death, judgment, eternity, the wrath of GOD omnipotent, the irreversible sentence, the bottomless pit, the lake of fire, the miseries of the damned! O, my dear hearers, let GOD be true, and every man a liar who would gainsay his word, his faithful, warning word, which declares—whatever the wicked may say and hope to the contrary—that impenitent sinners shall have "their portion where the worm never dies, and the fire never shall be quenched."

Seeing, then, my Christian brethren, that we look for such things, that they are most surely believed by us, "What man-

ner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" How ought our deportment in the world to indicate that we are not of the world? Alas! alas! because the love of many waxes cold, iniquity abounds! Let these solemn truths, then, bring us back to what we should be. Let us dwell upon them, and realize them, and act for our eternal interests with at least as much zeal and industry as we do for our earthly accommodations, profits and pleasures. Let not the name of God be profaned through our lukewarmness, coldness, and deadness in our religious profession. The veriest sinner in the world knows how we ought to be affected, and to walk in life, under the professed belief of the gospel. When, therefore, he sees professing Christians, under the declared expectation of heaven or hell, according to the deeds done in the body, walking according to the course of this world, he is not only fortified in unbelief, but filled with contempt for religion. Let this reproach, then, be put away from us, my brethren. "Yet a little while and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Let us, then, prepare to meet our God, that when he shall appear, we may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

SERMON XXVIII.

THE LOVE OF THE WORLD INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE LOVE OF GOD.

1 John ii. 15.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Amidst the various temptations which surround us, my brethren, some are more immediate and more powerful than others, not only in themselves, but also in the depraved affections of our corrupt hearts. Of those temptations, that which in Scripture language is called the world, appears to possess the greatest as well as the most general influence over mankind. Hence the frequency and earnestness with which the counsel and warning of God's most holy word is directed to this point; and the danger to be apprehended from undue preference of, and over engagement with, its business or its pleasures, is exhibited under the striking contrast of things which, from their very nature, must perish and come to an end, and of things equally, indeed more certainly, attainable by us, which shall endure and continue for ever.

Among those warnings my text holds a very conspicuous place. And as it presents to our consideration the solemn obligation to renounce and overcome the world, and to separate themselves from its unhallowed pursuits, which all baptized persons have come under, and all professing Christians have repeatedly renewed, and we are this day once more to renew in the most solemn manner in the sacrament of the death of Christ, I trust it will be a profitable improvement of the occasion, to lay before you such a plain but necessarily brief exposition of this unpalatable but vital subject, as shall, with the blessing of God, fasten upon the consciences of professing Christians their indispensable duty, and awaken unbelievers to the dangerous and unprofitable nature of those pursuits whose certain and declared end is irretrievable perdition.

With this view, I shall,

First, inquire what is to be understood by the word world, as here used.

Secondly, I will endeavor to point out what kind of conduct exhibits that "love of the world," and of "the things that are in it," which my text declares to be incompatible with sincerity of religious profession, here expressed by "the love of the Father."

Thirdly, I will conclude with some considerations calculated to enforce the exhortation of my text upon the communicants of the Church.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

I. First, I am to inquire what is to be understood by the word world, as here used.

That the word world is applied in various senses in the Scriptures, must be evident to all who have any acquaintance with the contents of the sacred volume. Sometimes it signifies the frame of the material world, or visible creation, as in the 24th Psalm—"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Sometimes it is used to denote the race of mankind in general, as in the 3d chapter of St. John's Gospel—"God so loved the world" as to send his Son to save it. In other instances, the wicked and ungodly are called the world, as in our Lord's discourse with his twelve disciples before his Passion, in the 15th chapter of the same Gospel—"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." In other places it is applied to the pursuits and occupations of men in the present life, whether innocent or criminal, but chiefly the latter, as in the words of my text—"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," and in the Epistle to the Romans—"Be not conformed to this world."

The proper meaning of the word in any particular place, therefore, must be determined by the context; and applying this rule to the word world, as used in the text, and in the chapter from which the text is taken, it is plain that Christians are exhorted against allowing their desires and affec-

tions to become entangled, and their exertions over-engaged, with the things that are in the world. And what those things are which are thus dangerous to the health of the soul, the inspired apostle enumerates under the threefold description of "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

The practical meaning of the word world, then, as here used, must be understood of those visible and sensible things which form, at one and the same time, the objects of our desire and pursuit, and the subjects of our trial and probation. Many of these are indispensable to our subsistence, as the necessary occupations and business of the present life, whereby alone those blessings and comforts, which the entrance of sin into the world banished from the spontaneous productions of the earth, are to be obtained. Some are objects of desire, and stimulate to industry by the gratification and enjoyment which they yield or serve to procure. Others are rendered necessary by the condition of the world—as the honors and emoluments of those offices of power and trust whereby civil government is conducted. And all of them are in themselves good, as serving to maintain the state of the world; perfectly consistent with the religious duties of redeemed sinners in their engagement with them, yet capable of being perverted, and of becoming the fruitful occasion of sin and condemnation, by the abuse.

In the combined influence of these indispensable, desirable, and necessary things, we learn, my brethren, what that world is, against the love of which we are so earnestly warned and exhorted. And as they are objects of desire and attainment to all, they form a just measure of moral condition in the sight of God—according to the preference given to them, to the means used to obtain them, and to the application made of them when obtained.

II. Secondly, I am to point out what kind of conduct exhibits that love of the world and of the things that are in it, which my text declares to be incompatible with sincerity of religious profession here, expressed by "the love of the Father."

If we bear in mind, my brethren and hearers, to what description of persons this and the other epistles of the apostles

of Christ were addressed, it will present two points of discrimination in moral condition, of very awakening interest to the two classes into which the world called Christian is divided, and very helpful to a right understanding and safe application of this part of my subject, and of the contents of the epistles generally.

Now there can be no reasonable doubt that the epistles were addressed exclusively to believers in Christ, whose faith in him was publicly professed; who were taken into union with Christ by the sacrament of baptism; constituted thereby members of his body, the Church; entitled to all the privileges of the household of faith, in the sacrament of his death, in the sanctifying operations of the Holy Ghost, and in the precious promises of Almighty God, made to them in Christ. This being undeniably the case, the two points of discrimination in moral condition presented to our consideration, are the following:

First, that none were considered in union with Christ, and entitled to the promises of the gospel, but those only who were in open communion with the visible Church, and with the apostles as the representatives of Christ upon earth—there not being a single instance in the whole New Testament, of any who were accounted and acknowledged as believers in Christ, after the day of Pentecost, but such only as followed up their baptismal profession by continuing "steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Secondly, the exhortations to watchfulness against sin in general, and against particular temptations to sin, and the warnings so frequently repeated, that the promises and privileges of the gospel would all be forfeited by remissness in their duty, and disregard of the obligations entered into at their baptism—being addressed exclusively to Christians, is conclusive testimony against all absolute and unconditional doctrine in the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the strongest conceivable argument that Christians, as such, should "give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, lest they fail of the grace of God."

The inquiry, then, being into a particular course of conduct, by a particular class of persons, under special and de-

clared obligations, it will be the more easy for me to point out, and for you to apprehend, whereby is exhibited that love of the world and of the things that are in it, which is incompatible with the profession of a Christian. And, as our engagement with the world is comprehended under the two heads of its business and its pleasures, I shall confine myself to them, as presenting the most profitable, because the most necessary, application of my text.

First, then, as respects our worldly business.

Christians, having the same wants with other men, are obliged to resort to some active means to supply them. Indeed, the first penalty imposed upon man after he became mortal, was labor—"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the ground." And in some way, though in very various manners and degrees, all have to submit to this universal law. But if the necessary business of life is pursued by the believer with the same views and to the same ends as by the unbeliever; if he give way to the temptations of gain, or of ambition, or of voluptuousness, and suffer his affections to become bound down to the things that are in the world, however lawful in themselves; if they are sought after for their own sake, or relied upon with unhallowed dependence; above all, if his worldly business is allowed to interfere with or to supersede the care of his soul, as he differs in nothing but the name and mere outward profession from the men of the world, who have their portion in this life—he is classed with them by that righteous Judge who searcheth the hearts of the children of men, and determines the moral condition of his creatures, not by their professions, but by the motives and ends which actuate and govern their conduct.

To fallen beings, whose hearts are corrupt, whose affections are estranged from God, in whom flesh and sense predominate, who by faith only can pass beyond the boundary of the present life, and who can arrive at faith and hope towards God no otherwise than by the preventing grace of the Holy Ghost, the danger is imminent, that in the pursuits and occupations of time, eternity should be overlooked. Hence the deep interest manifested by our Lord himself, and by his inspired apostles, that all who profess and call themselves

Christians, should be constantly on their guard against the seducing influence of temporal condition in the temptations presented by the necessary business of life, and by the still more insidious and encroaching operation of the riches, honors, and pleasures of the world; and hence the plain, earnest, and repeated warnings in the word of GOD, against the danger, both direct and indirect, arising from this cause.

As "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," our blessed LORD thence derives the various cautions which are recorded for our learning:— "Take heed, and beware of covetousness;" "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life;" "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of GOD! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of GOD." "And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; for, if ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"

St. Paul's testimony to the danger, to Christians, from the temptations incident to the business of the world, is equally clear and direct. "The love of money," says he, "is the root of all evil." "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition." Hence, this apostle classes covetousness with idolatry, and includes it among those sins which exclude men from the kingdom of heaven. "For this ye know," says he, writing to the Ephesians, "that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor *covetous man*, who is an *idolater*, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of CHRIST and of GOD." To the operation of this inordinate appetite, likewise, he ascribes the difficulties and obscurities charged against the gospel by those who for this cause rejected it. "If our gospel be hid," says he, that is, hard to understand, "it is hid through the things which perish," that is, the profits and the pleasures of the world, whereby, that is, by the influence of which, "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glori-

ous gospel of CHRIST, who is the image of GOD, should shine unto them." And hence his exhortations to the Churches under his care—"So to use this world as not abusing it." "To be content with such things as they have." "To set their affections on things above, and not on things on the earth;" and, as including all, "not to be conformed to this world."

St. James, also, sets forth the obstructions thrown in the way of religious attainment, by over-engagement with the things that are in the world, in very strong language. "Ye lust and have not; ye have not, because ye ask not; ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with GOD? Whosoever, therefore, will be the friend of the world is the enemy of GOD." And, in the same earnest manner, he denounces the ruinous consequences of "riches kept by the owners thereof to their hurt. Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you; your riches are corrupted, your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire."

And St. John confirms the whole by declaring, as in the words of my text, that over-engagement with the business of the world, however lawful and necessary the business may be, is such evidence of a preference of the world, as ranks its unhappy object as the enemy of GOD—"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Such is the clear and convincing testimony of divine truth, my brethren, to the danger arising from our necessary connexion with the business of the world. The principle is plain and obvious to every apprehension, and there can be no difficulty in every man's so applying it to his own conduct, in connexion with the motives which prompt and govern that conduct, as readily to determine whether he is in such wise a lover of the world, as that the love of the Father cannot be the real temper of his soul. And should any be disposed to think it a hard saying, and to repine at so severe a probation, let such reflect seriously on the nature of moral conduct, on the requisites to a state of trial, on the objects to be attained by the self-denial and watchfulness to be exercised, and on

the means bestowed by a gracious God to ensure victory to the faithful soldier of the cross in this warfare; and all such sinful repining must be banished from the thoughts, as alike dishonorable to God and injurious to ourselves. But, more than this. When it is considered that what Christians are warned against is excess in the desire, and abuse in the application, of the things that are in the world, whatever would oppose itself to the equity of his dealing with us in this trial of our faith and obedience, must stand condemned as no less unreasonable than sinful; and the conclusion be universally admitted, that it is only by the most inexcusable neglect of the warnings of God's word, of the solemn obligations of the baptismal covenant, and of the appointed means of grace, that the world prevails against so many immortal and redeemed souls, and robs them of their salvation, under the delusive promises of its most uncertain and most surely perishing reward.

Secondly, as respects our worldly enjoyments.

Labor and toil, success and disappointment, suffering and death, fill up the chequered scene of this world's pilgrimage. "Great travail is created for every man, and an heavy yoke is on the sons of Adam from the day that they go out of their mother's womb, till the day that they return to the mother of all things."* Yet while this truth will be felt and acknowledged by all, it would betray a most ungrateful and unthankful spirit to overlook the many sources of comfort and enjoyment which the love of God hath reserved to his creatures, out of the wreck of that unmixed happiness in which they were originally placed by their Creator. And were men but as wise to discern, and as willing to be instructed, wherein their true happiness consists, as they are eager to pursue pleasure, and careless to consider the quality of the delight, the moral condition of the world would speedily change sides, and the balance preponderate in favor of enjoyment. For, "God giveth us all things richly to enjoy," and mercifully superadds those warnings and cautions which render enjoyment rational, sure, and lasting.

Man, then, is the artificer of his own misery, and strange

* Eccles. xl. 1.

as it may appear, he becomes such chiefly in the pursuit of his happiness. But, as it is the happiness of a fallen nature which he pursues, the fruit of his labor is disappointment. The deluding phantom still flits before him, still escapes his eager grasp; till exhausted passions and decayed powers yield to that mortal stroke which writes "vanity and vexation of spirit" upon every pursuit unconnected with eternity.

Of the things that are in the world which may be classed under the head of enjoyments, the same is true as of the business of the world. It is by the quality of its nature, the degree of desire and pursuit, and the extent of its indulgence, that the character of enjoyment, and the evidence thereby given of moral condition, is determined. "Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of GOD"—however lawful and innocent in themselves those pleasures may be—give thereby as direct evidence of the idolatry of the heart, of its preference of the creature to the Creator, as is furnished by the lovers of all evil. And as the Searcher of hearts will be guided by this rule in the judgment of eternity, it forms the standard to which the Christian must bring his condition, and by which he must determine the allowable or forbidden, the profitable or injurious, character of his worldly enjoyments.

The pleasures of the world which affect most directly our religious condition, may properly be reduced to these two; the gratifications of sense, and the gratifications of vanity. The former of these will include the appetites and passions of the body; the latter, the appetites and passions of the mind.

First, then, of the appetites and passions of the body, it must be evident that the abuse only can be criminal. They are necessary parts of the frame of our being, and must be supplied in their various wants if we would continue to exist. Hence inordinate desire and intemperate indulgence mark that preference of carnal delights which is utterly incompatible with any serious sense of religious obligation; and, as it tends directly to destroy the body, to debase the faculties of the soul, to efface the image of GOD stamped upon those faculties, and to degrade a rational being to the level of the beasts that perish, is abhorred of GOD.

Against this strong propensity and ever-present temptation, our blessed LORD directed his warning when he said to

his disciples, "Take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness:" and the existing state of society demonstrates, how thoroughly sensual indulgence blocks up the avenue to spiritual attainment. Against this danger, the Christian has to arm himself with the greater care, in proportion as the morality of the world has approximated to the standard of the gospel, and the grossness and licentiousness of vice has been banished from the decency of civilized manners. And it is a point of Christian obligation, which requires to be the more strongly enforced, because of the prevailing propensity to measure and compare our moral condition rather with that of those around us, than with the requirements of the gospel; and if free from the profligate debauchery of the dissolute, to cherish a pharisaical righteousness, and thank God "that we are not as other men are."

But, my brethren, vice changes not its character with its dress. However decent in its exterior, however refined in its habiliments, it is still the dark and deformed thing which is at enmity with God, and excludes from his favor. Where the heart is set upon self-indulgence—whether it be the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the mind, with whatever decency, or secrecy, or profession of piety it may be covered—it is impressed with that preference of regard which my text declares incompatible with the love of God.

In the external similarity of moral condition and conduct which Christian lands exhibit, it would be both tedious and difficult so to illustrate the general principle by particular examples as to meet the variety of cases to which it applies. The Christian, however, the believer in God and in Jesus Christ our Lord, is furnished with effectual means in the knowledge of his own heart, and in the counsel and example of the divine word, to determine the governing principle of his life; and he is bound by the worth of his soul to apply them faithfully. If the love of the Father rules his heart, the apostolic precept, "whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," will preside over the gratifications he allows to the appetites and passions of his mortal nature, and will increase their enjoyment by heartfelt thankfulness for the bounty which supplies the use, and for

the heavenly grace which restrains from the abuse, of the divine mercies. But where the love of the world in its sensual gratifications prevails or predominates, and in proportion to the degree, there the sense of GOD as supreme, of dependence upon him, and of thankfulness to him for his good creatures, is either "not in all the thoughts," or the mere transient scintillation of better principle, dying away under the suffocating influence of those "fleshly lusts which war against the soul." And even where doubt may be entertained as to the governing principle of the conduct, where fears may exist that the love of worldly pleasure is stronger in the heart than the love of GOD, let the Christian, let the person who would be a Christian, keep in mind, that self-denial is the strait and narrow way which leadeth unto life, and that by thus taking up the cross he becomes that disciple of CHRIST, for whom there is treasure laid up in heaven.

Secondly, the gratifications of vanity.

Under this denomination a class of vices is included equally destructive of and inconsistent with the religious principle in the heart, and as clearly denoting its alienation from GOD, as the grosser sins of sensual indulgence. Of this, however, it appears hard to convince men, notwithstanding the testimony of Scripture and reason to the fact, and of observation and experience to the effect. Hence it is the more necessary to point out their danger in this respect to professors of religion—a danger greatly increased by the growing disregard of those wise and reasonable distinctions in external deportment, which mark the separation of the Christian from the world during the rest of the week as well as on the LORD'S day.

The vicious and sinful indulgences which come under this head, are such as are connected with and derived from what St. John denominates "the pride of life." And as this is to be understood of the ostentatious display of worldly power and riches, it will include all those extravagances over which the fashion of the world bears rule, with a domination more extensive and with an observance more unreserved, than the holy and life-giving word of GOD receives from the creatures of his power and the objects of his mercy.

But, what, my dear brethren, has the Christian to do with any of these things? What has the person who has felt and

confessed himself to be a fallen and depraved creature, a ruined and condemned sinner, a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth, who professes to look for another and a better country, even an heavenly—what has such a one to do with the pride of life in any of its shapes? Is it for him to glory in his riches or personal consequence, and by an ostentatious display in his domestic establishment, to bring in question the sincerity of his public profession of religion? Surely pride was not made for such a one, or the blessing of GOD bestowed on his industry to be lavished on any of its destructive temptations. Alas! my brethren, how loudly will the sufferings of the afflicted members of CHRIST, the viciousness of the ignorant and the idle, and the meagre support bestowed upon that gospel which they profess to believe, cry out against the offerers of such idolatrous sacrifices to the pride of life, in the great day of eternity! And how sorely will many, who profess and call themselves Christians, then lament the unjustifiable surrenders thus made to the pride and vanity of a corrupt heart, deluded with the form of godliness, shaking hands with the world, and crying, LORD, LORD, without doing the things which he says.

In like manner, what has the Christian, the person who professes to entertain a godly sorrow for the sinfulness of his nature, with an humble hope of mercy through the righteousness of CHRIST—what has such a person to do with any of those extravagances of dress and ornament which mark so clearly the sinful vanity of personal decoration? Do not Christians know that excess of apparel is expressly forbidden them, not only as unseemly for persons professing godliness, but as an abuse of means to be otherwise applied? Do they not know that it is actually glorying in their shame, a being vain of their ruin? For what is clothing of any kind but a defect occasioned by sin, in this way replaced by the divine mercy? Alas! for the precious time and bountiful means wasted on this unworthy vanity, for the self idolatry it prompts, for the exclusion of all serious thought it produces, and for the crime it occasions, in order to compass its indulgence! Alas! for the retribution to be awarded when the hungry, and the naked, and the houseless, shall claim from the common Father of all their share of this wasted super-

fluity, and he shall demand it at their hands to whom his providence committed it as a talent to be improved to his glory!

Hearken, my dear brethren, "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me; and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and thou art tormented"—and learn from this impressive parable what the pomps and vanities of this world end in, and "be no longer faithless, but believing."

And what can more deeply condemn the vain amusements of the world than the incitement they present, and the opportunity they furnish, for the sinful indulgence of these vicious gratifications. Without a theatre for their display, the wasteful extravagance of entertainment, and unscriptural excess of adornment, would come to an end. Deprive the theatres, and ball rooms, and other debaucheries of the world, of the countenance of Christian parents and their families, they will soon be abandoned by the more orderly and moral of the non-professing part of the community, and finally by all but the dissolute and the profligate.

Do not Christians, then, owe this much to the consistency of their profession? Yes, they owe it to the safety of their own souls—to the souls of those for whom they have covenanted with God, and to good example in the world. Besides, did Christians but reflect what causes and occasions of sin are furnished by all those sources of dissipation, in the sight of that pure and holy Being who condemns the idolatry of the heart, and the adultery of the eye, equally with the actual commission of the sin, surely none, who regard even the name

of Christian, could again be prevailed on to enter the temple of vanity—to sacrifice to the Moloch of the world's idolatry and sensuality the sober joy and holy hope which cheers the heart, animates the life, and makes peaceful the death of the humble believer, who by faith "overcomes the world," "and lays hold on eternal life."

III. Thirdly, and to conclude: the considerations which are calculated to enforce the exhortation of my text upon the communicants of the Church, are, the quality of the things themselves, their connexion with our spiritual condition, and the personal undertaking of every professor of religion.

The quality of worldly engagements and worldly delights is, necessarily, hostile to the spirit of religion; and the very name implies as much. Were they not "of the world," in the bad sense of these words; were they neutral even, in regard to moral effect—as too many wish to think them—and not intrinsically opposed to the sobriety and watchfulness of a momentary existence connected with eternal retribution, so much pains never would have been taken by the wisdom of God, as we see is taken to warn mankind at large, and Christians in particular, against their dangerous effects. This consideration is of itself sufficient, my brethren, to enforce the self-denials to which communicants are pledged, and on which their salvation so absolutely depends.

When we add to this the connexion of "the things that are in the world," with our spiritual condition, another consideration of deep interest to the Christian, and well calculated to fortify the soul against their ensnaring effects, is presented to our notice.

For, however valued, however followed, however dearly purchased, by the thousands who give their souls in exchange, they are in themselves of no real worth to the most pressing want of a fallen sinner. They cannot give to God a ransom for their owners, nor redeem them from the power of the grave. Before sin entered into the world they found no place in it, and when sin shall be confined in the lake of fire they will be shut out from the blessed abode of the righteous. The happiness of heaven will have no connexion with those perishing gratifications which sin hath entailed on our mortal nature.

This consideration, therefore, ought to fortify the believer

against the seducing influence of their deceitful promises. In the present life they are, to the Christian, the trial of his faith and love; and his everlasting freedom from all their disquieting temptations depends on his overcoming them now. In the present life they form the test of his spiritual condition to the believer. As his desires determine to the world or to GOD, so is he earthly and sensual, or heavenly minded and spiritual. The communicant, therefore, who conforms to the world in the pursuits and indulgences of its idolatry, or who mingles with the giddy followers of its time-wasting, thought-excluding, soul-ensnaring dissipations, does thereby give most unhappy proof that the spirit of the world, and not the SPIRIT of CHRIST, bears rule in his heart, and, consequently, that "the love of the Father is not in him."

Above all, the personal undertaking of every professor of religion being the renunciation of the world in all those things which mark so clearly its alienation from GOD, this consideration should give force to all the others, and combine them into one commanding restraint of every inordinate and sinful desire of the honors and pleasures of the world. To the communicants of the Church, in particular, this consideration should be of the utmost weight. For they have not only by implication and as a consequence of their profession, renounced the world, but specifically at their baptism, and again in their confirmation, have renounced "the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same," as fully as they have renounced "the devil and all his works." This obligation they solemnly renew over the broken body and shed blood of their Saviour in the sacrament of his death, the highest and the holiest of all conceivable engagements. And may GOD grant that those who are this day to give this solemn pledge of amended life, may gladly "suffer the word of exhortation," and so "discern the LORD's body," as to put away from themselves and their families whatever can bring reproach on the name of CHRIST—scandal on his Church—and ruin on their own souls.

NOW, to GOD the Father, GOD the Son, and GOD the HOLY GHOST, be ascribed the glory and praise due to the only living and true GOD, by all creatures, now and for ever more. AMEN.

SERMON XXIX.

RELIGIOUS EXAMINATION.

2 Corinthians xiii. 5.

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.

Need I say to you, my brethren and hearers, that among those subjects of thought and reflection which occupy the anxieties of the present life, the consideration of our place in the divine favor, and of the ground on which it is entertained, is unspeakably the most important?—Surely this is not needed by any now before me. Yet it is equally sure, I apprehend, that there are many present, by whom neither time or thought is given to this great interest, and to whom it must be profitable to be reminded of the one thing needful, and to be counselled and exhorted, that amid the business and the pleasures of the world, time should be taken to consider the worth of eternity, and to prove your expectations of its endless and unchangeable sanction, by the unerring standard of God's most holy and most merciful revelation to his creatures. Were it so, indeed, that we could not err, and err fatally, too, in our religious belief and practice, no occasion could have been found for the apostle to press this duty upon his converts, nor would it be necessary to repeat the exhortation continually to Christian people. But, as the danger was imminent in the beginning of Christianity, as experience proves that it has not lessened in the progress of the gospel, as corruptions have multiplied, and indifference has increased, so has it become a more imperious duty for Christians to institute this examination and proof of their religious condition, and according to the result to estimate their hope for hereafter.

To deceive ourselves on this subject, is to be undone for ever, my hearers; and with such an alternative at stake, and with such effectual means to determine the point, the equity of our own hearts must decide, that indifference, even, to the

event, deserves to be thus undone. Let us, then, consider this momentous subject with the seriousness and attention it ought surely to command from every accountable being; and as the word of GOD shall warrant, be warned to repent and amend our ways, or encouraged to hope and persevere unto the end. To assist you herein, I shall point out what it is that we are to examine ourselves concerning—how we are to make this examination, and how to come at the proof or assurance that we are "in the faith."

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."

I. First, what it is that we are to examine ourselves concerning.

The words, "in the faith," refer us, undoubtedly, to something definite and determined as the body of religious doctrine and practice delivered to and received by all who profess to embrace the gospel. This body of doctrine, accordingly, is called in Scripture, "the faith once delivered to the saints," "the form of sound words," received from the apostles of CHRIST, and "the doctrine which is according to godliness." The point to be examined into, therefore, is whether we believe the doctrines and practise the duties of the Christian religion as taught and delivered to the saints, or associated members of the Church of CHRIST, by his apostles. The inquiry is not whether we are believers, in the sense of acknowledging the truth of the facts and doctrines of revelation; but whether the knowledge of those facts and doctrines has brought us to CHRIST for the promises of GOD, made to the world through him. Nothing less than this will answer the strength and peculiarity of the expression, "in the faith," which can have no other safe or reasonable meaning than this—of being truly and vitally united to the faith, in a thankful reception of the gospel, and of living, or walking by faith, in conformity with the example and commands of the author and finisher of our faith.

This is certified to us both by the reason of the thing and by the use frequently made in the Scriptures of the word *in*, to denote condition or influence. Thus, when St. Paul expresses his wish "to be found in CHRIST," the meaning is, that he may be a partaker of the salvation procured by his

undertaking for sinners; and when St. John tells us that he was "in the spirit" at a particular time, the meaning is, that he was then under the special influence of the HOLY GHOST, and in like manner of the word as used in my text.

Much of the true meaning and importance of the text, and consequently of the duty therein exhorted to, depends, also, upon the word *the*, as connected with the word *faith*. "The faith" does not mean a faith, or some faith, or a part of the faith, but is definite and precise, and directs and limits the inquiry to a known and specified subject. In confirmation of this, religion is never spoken of in the Scriptures as multiform, that is, consistent with variety or variation of belief and obedience, but as a harmonious and agreeing system of faith and holiness, devised by the divine wisdom for the benefit of fallen sinners, and, as such, unchangeable. "There is one faith," says the inspired word; just as there is one body, or Church, to which this one faith is delivered, and in which it must be professed; one LORD, or head of that body, and one SPIRIT given to abide with the body for the union and life of all its true members. This is the faith which we are to examine ourselves whether we are in; that is, whether we truly believe, profess, and practise the religion of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as taught by his apostles, recorded in the Scriptures of our faith, and received and followed by the primitive Church. This is the duty to which we are exhorted in the text, and we are therefore exhorted to it because by this means only can we determine, satisfactorily, what our religious condition really is, and what our dependence for hereafter is actually worth.

Let us, then, inquire,

II. Secondly, how we are to make this examination.

Religion, or being "in the faith," is not our birthright, my hearers. No man is born a believer. Yet, where the gospel has shed its happy light, all are brought into being with the means of becoming Christians—and hence the peculiar expression of being "born again," used to denote the spiritual change which must be wrought in every practical sinner who would be and who is a Christian indeed. Religion, then, being a personal attainment, is to be examined into, and tried and determined by its proper evidences, in the same manner

as any other attainable personal qualification. If we possess it, we must surely be able to show by what means we obtained it; and by bringing our religious condition, and the means made use of in its attainment, to the standard given in the Scriptures, we can be certified and assured as to the highest and most anxious concern which can engage our attention. To the Scriptures, then, let us bring this examination, and let each determine his own case by its agreement or disagreement therewith.

The persons spoken of in Scripture as being "in the faith," are described as having been brought by the preaching of the word to a just sense of their lost and undone condition, as sinners both by nature and practice—as having truly repented of and forsaken their former sinful courses—as having thankfully embraced the mercy offered them, through the atonement of the cross—as being baptized in acknowledgment of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and of their dedicating themselves to his service—and, as living answerable to his laws and example in all holiness and righteousness of life and conversation—"Continuing steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers;" as it is briefly expressed of the first Christians in the Scriptures, to denote their union and constancy in the faith.

Now, as there is but one faith, and one strait and narrow way to enter into life, all that they were then, must be found in us now, my brethren and hearers, if we would entertain a good hope of the same reward which animated them, to which they waded through flames and blood, and to which we are more mercifully called without a privation or a suffering to encounter. Oh! how should it deepen our thankfulness, that Christ's yoke is indeed made easy and his burden light to us, compared with what it was to them; and how should we fear to separate from this holy fellowship, and strive to improve our distinguishing mercies, and walk worthy of his goodness "who hath caused the lines to fall unto us in pleasant places, and hath given us a goodly heritage."

To be "in the faith," then, according to the testimony of Scripture, it is requisite that believers in the truth of revelation should be regenerated in baptism and spiritually renewed

by the Holy Ghost; that they should cease from sin, earnestly repenting of it, as the cause of God's wrath and the ruin of their souls, and be converted from the love and practice of its wickedness; that they should openly embrace the gospel as the truth of God for their salvation; that they should believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God, their only Saviour and their Judge—that they should confess him before men as the Lord their righteousness, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of his holy laws, in the spirit of love towards each other, and of peace and good will towards all mankind. This is the standard to which to bring this all-important examination of ourselves; for only as our lives are in agreement with what the Scriptures plainly teach, can there be any rational hope of the mercy therein revealed and of the blessings therein promised.

III. Thirdly, I am to point out to you how to come at the proof or assurance that we are "in the faith."

"Prove your own selves," says the apostle.

As religion is not an abstract speculation of the mind, but a living, active principle of faith and holiness, the proof that it presides over and rules the life, must always be derived from its visible effects. As the tree is known by its fruit, so is the Christian known by his conversation in the world. This is a divine maxim, and consequently a safe one; yet it requires to be guarded against in the abuse which may be and is made of it, to the entire unsettling of those distinctive marks which the Scriptures instruct us to build our assurance upon. Because the proof of our spiritual state being derived from the two-fold testimony of external condition and internal consciousness, it is from the agreement of both these, and not of either singly, with the word of God, that Scriptural assurance is to be entertained. In the nature of things, external condition must be the ground of, or rather must precede, internal consciousness; that is, we must first be conformed to what the gospel requires of outward observance, before we can be rightly entitled to the comfort and assurance which the gospel promises to believers. This is so very plain and undeniable, that it is wonderful and greatly to be lamented it should be overlooked or disregarded by

numbers who, I doubt not, are truly desirous to honor GOD in their lives.

Again: As every effect flows from its particular cause, as well in spiritual as in natural things, it is the duty of the Christian to be as careful of the commanded means as he is solicitous of the promised end; all the external appointments of religion, therefore, (the Church, the ministry, the word, and the sacraments,) being from GOD, are, as such, to be reverenced and observed by us. And as they are his means to the production of an end in us and for our benefit, we can have no Scriptural ground to expect the end separate from the means. It is not sufficient, then, my brethren and hearers, to look to the conversation alone in order to prove our spiritual state. Our title to those promises of divine assistance on which all spiritual attainment by us does wholly depend, must first be proved by its agreement with the requirements of Scripture, and the conversation or life also agreeing therewith, and not otherwise. We may, then, joyfully and securely take to ourselves all the comfort which the witness of the SPIRIT of GOD with our spirits, that we are the children of GOD, can give.

Once more: From the nature of religion as a moral attainment and a reasonable service, the satisfaction and enjoyment we are entitled to look for under its influence must always be subsequent to its duties—must flow from them, and be proportioned to the faithfulness with which they are performed. Christian joy and rejoicing, therefore, is not the impulse of mere feeling stirred into occasional excitement, but it is the rational approval of the heart, filled with hope from the consciousness of duty performed through love to GOD. This was St. Paul's ground of rejoicing; and no Christian, I should think, need want a better or a different one—"Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience," says he, "that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world." And St. John teaches, that "if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards GOD." And in like manner of assurance that we are "in the faith," that is, are true believers and sincere Christians. This must always be derived from its proper proofs—carefully guarding against any assumption of condition which has not

the joint warrant of the word of God and of our own conscience, as the instrument by which the Holy Spirit applies that word to our edification and comfort.

Having thus explained the text, and in such wise, I trust, that all present are competent to apply it to their own personal condition as probationers for eternity, I proceed now to enforce this duty by the considerations proper to its supreme importance.

It is very reasonable to suppose, I think, that the same Scriptures which have proposed to us religion as our duty, and happiness as its end and reward, have also taught us how to judge and determine, satisfactorily, when we are in the way that leads to the truth of the one and the certainty of the other.

If this is so, must it not be the most wilful rejection of light and knowledge, to rest our religious condition, and by certain consequence, our eternal state, on a foundation which we have not examined by the standard of God's holy word? And yet this is the case with all who are careless and unconcerned on the subject of religion. For it is not that such persons do reject God and his word—the Lord Jesus Christ and his salvation. No—and I appeal to their hearts at this moment that they do not. But they permit the god of this world to delude them with hopes of mercy through Christ, or with intentions of future repentance, and are gradually becoming hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Now, what is there in the reach of man to withstand this delusion, but serious examination? And surely if any thing can prompt them to engage in it, it must be the consideration, that only as we are united to Christ by a living faith, and continue therein, is there hope towards God for a fallen sinner.

Again: As we are intelligent beings and free agents, God is declared in Scripture to deal with us as such. Religion, then, is concerned with our reason and our wills, with our hopes and our fears. Hence, the doctrines revealed in the gospel, the system of its duties, the inducements to practise them, and the sanctions of its commands, are all addressed to those faculties and affections.

But if we permit our reason to be blinded by conclusions, unsupported by the word of God, and our affections to be

exclusively engaged with the world and its occupations, all religious attainment is forcibly excluded, and the very faculties which GOD hath given for the noblest purposes are squandered upon pursuits which have no permanency—which cannot satisfy the soul or give relief in the day of trouble and anguish—which cannot quiet the conscience, make our peace with GOD, or still the fears and allay the terrors of a dying bed. Yet the consideration that this awaits us all, might strip the mask from these vanities and restore an immortal being to the true purpose of his creation and redemption—to his true happiness—to his GOD. And what more likely to effect this than the serious examination of the conditions on which GOD hath suspended the rewards and the punishments of eternity?

Once more: Every man, in proportion to his understanding, perceives that he is bound by his very nature to acknowledge and obey the laws of GOD; and if a blessing is promised to such obedience, the same understanding which enables him to apprehend the condition and the promise, shows him, also, on an examination of his conduct, what expectation he has of attaining the promised blessing. No man, therefore, under the light of the gospel, can plead any other than a wilful, and, as such, an inexcusable, ignorance. The dignity of the author of our salvation, the unspeakable worth of eternity, and the reason of your own minds, my dear hearers, all unite in pressing upon your hearts the exhortation of my text.

Let not, then, that evil spirit which has gone forth into the world, and instilled the ruinous delusion into the hearts of men, that the precious benefits of the death of CHRIST may be obtained without conforming to the requirements of the gospel, make vain this exhortation to you. But take your Bibles and your lives into solemn retirement, and there examine what your hope now is, whereon it is founded, and what it will be in the day of death and judgment if you continue as you are—unconverted—impenitent—unholy. "Examine yourselves," then, "whether ye be in the faith." Seize the precious moments of GOD's sparing mercy, to repent and turn from the error of your ways. Come to that merciful Saviour who stands ready to receive the true penitent; and,

in newness of life, wait upon GOD in humble prayer, for the blessing of his love shed abroad in your heart by the HOLY GHOST, and for the hope that maketh not ashamed, because full of immortality.

Upon you, my Christian brethren, I must also press the exhortation of my text. You are "in the faith," indeed, by an open profession of religion, and have not, I trust, to "lay again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith towards GOD." But for you it is safe, while to me it is not grievous, to remind you, that the more diligent and faithful you are in examining yourselves, the more will your light shine and your religious comforts increase. The world is an encroaching thing, my dear brethren, and demands continual watchfulness to withstand the blandishment of its temptations. Our own hearts are treacherous, and we have great cause to fear lest we decline into the cold formality of heartless habit, the living death of religion without power, without the felt influence of the love of CHRIST constraining us to give him all our praise, all our duty, as our GOD and Saviour. To avoid this too ready and too common evil, frequent and faithful self-examination whether our lives are answerable to our holy profession, and that to the revealed directions of the word of GOD, is the best safe-guard. It compels the Christian to keep a record, as it were, of his very thoughts, and thus enables him to bring to the mercy seat for pardon and grace, his failures in duty, his sinful inclinations, his evil tempers—his weaknesses of every kind—before they strengthen into habit.

To retire frequently with GOD to commune with our own heart, begets a holy watchfulness against sin, a lively desire for growth in grace, and increases strength by the frequency and fervency of prayer; for GOD hath so appointed, that "to him that hath shall be given." More especially in the near approach of the solemn celebration of our Saviour's Passion is it both requisite and profitable that we enter faithfully upon this examination of ourselves; that we may present to GOD, through his merits, a sincere offering, and, with hearts truly penitent for all our failures towards him, and truly desirous of the succor and help of his HOLY SPIRIT, may be replenished with the comfort of his forgiveness, and enriched

with the treasure of his heavenly grace, to love him more and serve him better for the time to come.

It is a feast of love, my brethren. Let us, therefore, "examine and prove our own selves," that love may abound towards GOD and towards each other, and blessing from on high be poured out upon us and upon all the Israel of GOD.

Now, to GOD the Father, GOD the Son, and GOD the HOLY GHOST, be glory, now and for ever.

SERMON XXX.

NON-CONFORMITY WITH THE WORLD.

ROMANS xii. 2, first clause.

AND be not conformed to this world.

It appears to have been St. Paul's method, in writing to the Churches, to lay down, in the first place, the doctrines of Christianity, and from them to draw those obligations to practical duty which all who profess to believe the gospel are bound to observe and to carry out into their daily conversation in the world. Upon this principle all his epistles —particularly that to the Romans—are constructed. And hereby we are taught, my brethren, to consider carefully the close connexion between the doctrines and the duties of our religion—to perceive the reasonableness of that service which GOD requires at our hands, and to understand that the knowledge of divine things communicated to us and the divine grace conferred upon us by the gospel, are no otherwise profitable than as they are rightly applied and improved.

Though the command of GOD is abundantly sufficient to make every rational being feel the obligation and render the duty of obedience, yet it is not to authority alone that obedience is to be referred. In things moral and spiritual, the connexion of the required duty with something previously done and communicated on the part of the Almighty GOD, and also with consequences subsequently to affect ourselves, enters very deeply into the grounds of Christian obligation, and enhances, even infinitely, the indispensable duty of Christian obedience. Hence, I think, may be shown the great error of referring the substance of religion either to the exuberance of internal feeling, or to the meagreness of external morality. Hence, also, Christians might be instructed how very important it is, that serious consideration of the doctrines of Christianity—of the intimate connexion of revealed religion with the actual condition of fallen creatures,

—should form the basis on which the gospel is embraced and followed, as the light of life—as the only ground of hope and exertion to sinners. By no other means now given us, it appears to me, can that union of the understanding and affections be produced which constitutes a reasonable service, worthy to be presented to the great Moral Governor of the Universe.

Upon this principle, I think, it is evident that St. Paul constructed the epistle from which my text is taken. He laid before the church in Rome the grounds on which their duty as redeemed creatures rested; he then pointed out the obligations they had come under as professed believers. He informed their understandings before he appealed to their hearts. And it was not until he had showed them the breadth and the length, and the height and the depth, of God's rich redeeming love, that he "besought them, by the mercies of God, to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, and not to be conformed to this world, as the reasonable service" as well as commanded duty of Christian believers.

On this ground, therefore, my brethren, do I wish you to meet the exhortation of my text, as that on which alone you can either realize its importance, feel its obligation, or fulfil its requirements. And it is a most affecting circumstance, and beyond all others touching to the feelings, that in the boundary of this world, the being is not found who can stand excused from the duty because he is not included in the consideration upon which it is required. All, without exception, are partakers of the mercies of God; and those mercies, would men but hear their voice, point them to God—to learn his will, to give themselves without reserve to his holy service, and to hope for his everlasting favor. To Christians, in particular, the mercies of God speak a language addressed directly to the heart, in the gift of Jesus Christ, the source of all present and the pledge of all future blessings. To them, an appeal in the name of him who hath "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," can surely never be in vain. To them an exhortation to promote his honor and advance his kingdom in the world, grounded on the mighty benefits conferred on them by him "who hath reconciled us

to God" by his death, must come with the most winning power. If the heart can feel, it must be touched—if the judgment can understand, it must approve; and both uniting, must constrain every sincere believer, every true disciple of the Lord Jesus, to give himself without reserve to this primary duty of separation from the world, as the distinguishing mark of that "peculiar people," whom his master came "to purify unto himself," that he might present them without spot to God, as inheritors of eternal glory.

As partakers, then, of the manifold grace of God, I beseech you, my brethren, to take this distinctive and all-important religious duty to your most serious consideration, and that you may be enabled to do so with advantage, I will now endeavor to explain to you,

First, what we are to understand by the words "this world," made use of in the text.

Secondly, what constitutes conformity to, or with, this world; and, then,

Conclude with an enforcement of the duty, from the obligations we have come under as professing Christians.

"And be not conformed to this world."

I. First, I am to explain what we are to understand by the words "this world," made use of in the text.

In the lanuguage of Scripture, the phrase "this world" is used in two significations—the one denoting the material world, or frame of created things, the other denoting the moral world, or the condition of mankind as respects virtue or vice. In the present instance, therefore, the words "this world" will signify the corrupt principles, maxims, fashions, customs, and manners of the world. With these the Christian is exhorted to have no conformity, fellowship, or agreement.

Whatever of difficulty, then, attends this subject as a practical question, there can be none either as to the meaning of the phrase, or as to the obligation of the duty enforced. Yet both observation and experience teach us, my brethren, that there is great, and, I fear, increasing difficulty in meeting the requirement of my text as it ought to be met by those who profess and call themselves Christians. But as mere difficulty forms no excuse to the Christian for the neglect of his duty, it behooves us all rather to consider with care where-

in the difficulty really consists, that we may set ourselves to overcome it with the greater diligence.

Now this is found partly in ourselves, and partly in the existing state of the Christian world. From the corruption of our nature we are continually disposed to lower the obligations of religion, and to become remiss in that watchfulness, self-denial, and faithfulness, which alone can ensure success in working out our everlasting salvation. Hence, as we decline from commanded duty, we decline also from religious attainment, for it is "to him that hath" that more "is given;" and thus Christians settle down into a lukewarm state of religion, and content themselves with the poor and low qualification that they are free from the outbreaking wickedness of the dissolute and the profligate. But as this is only the negative side of religion, as it is no more than what the morality of the world can compass—what unbelievers frequently manifest—its inevitable tendency is to assimilate Christians with the world, not to separate them from it; to obscure and eventually to obliterate that line of distinction which separates CHRIST from Belial, and to deaden exertion for the attainment of those heavenly tempers and holy dispositions which are indispensable to the enjoyment of GOD in glory.

In the existing state of the Christian world, also, is this difficulty not only found, but increased. Corrupt departure from the spirit of religion, in the neglect of primary and fundamental duties, never stops short of the entire destruction of the religious principle. "From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have." And though the unclean spirit may have been cast out, yet, if at any time his former residence become empty—if the light of Christian profession be not kept burning with the oil of prayer and watchfulness—he returns with a reinforcement of other yet more wicked spirits, and "the last state of that man is worse than the first."

Non-conformity with the world requiring a line to be drawn, on one side of which the Christian is bound to keep, as the world assimilates to the gospel through the civilizing influence of Christian truth, or as the gospel is assimilated to the world through the loose conversation of those who profess to

believe it, in either case the line is trodden out, and the difficulty to draw it afresh is increased. The power of habit, the influence of example, the sanction of numbers supporting each other, have a direct tendency to lower the standard of religious duty, to corrupt the purity of religion, and to tempt Christians to mingle in those unhallowed scenes where the votaries of the world delight to revel, and where vice is rendered more seductive and dangerous by being stripped of its grossness.

When the apostle penned the words of my text, the Christian convert had but to look around him, and, in the revolting obscenity of heathen manners, to mark out distinctly that world to which he was not to be conformed. But in the present day, when Christianity has become national, and divisions in religion have set up opposite standards of faith and morals—when all claim the Christian name, and the form of godliness has eat out the power thereof—a harder task awaits the person who would indeed fulfil the duty enjoined by my text, and draw the line betwixt himself and the world.

Yet, my dear brethren, it must be drawn, and it must be observed. If we would enjoy the peace of God upon earth, or the presence of God in heaven, we must make our calling and election sure, by a clear and distinct separation from the world—from its evil ways, and unprofitable pursuits. And as this is our indispensable duty, so, by the goodness of God, every Christian is furnished with such plain directions, and with such effectual help, as, if faithfully followed, will insure success. As we have the same world to contend with, so have we the same grace and truth to strengthen and direct us which the early Christians had. And though the world has changed the type of its viciousness, through the knowledge of Christian doctrine, it is still the world, and, as such, is to be watched against, and the snare of its temptations avoided.

In order, then, to surmount this difficulty, and enable you, my brethren, to draw the line between the world and religion, let us inquire,

II. Secondly, what constitutes conformity to, or with, "this world."

In order to answer this question aright, we must bear in

mind in what sense the words are here used by the apostle. And as he has been shown to apply them exclusively to the corrupt, sinful, and irreligious part of mankind, we are furnished with a safe rule to direct our judgment.

Conformity with this world, therefore, consists in agreement and participation with it, in those pursuits and pratices which are either directly or indirectly opposed to the purity and holiness of the gospel, and to the interests of our own souls, or the souls of others.

If this definition be correct, which I conceive it to be, it will follow that in those things which are expressly commanded or forbidden by the law of God, the neglect or violation of which constitutes actual sin, Christians, as such, cannot be conformed to this world; because the habit of wilful violation of the law of God vacates the Christian character, and transfers all who are thus guilty to the side of the world. They are "not of God;" and the exhortation to such, must be different from that in the text—it must be to repent and turn to God.

It also follows, that the crime of conformity to this world cannot be charged against Christians, because they are found pursuing the same callings, occupations, and professions which are also followed by the people of the world. A Christian magistrate, a Christian lawyer, a Christian merchant, farmer, tradesman, or mechanic, is not, therefore, conformed to the world, because the great majority which follow those callings are irreligious men; the callings themselves are lawful and necessary to maintain the state of the world; and well were it for the world, and for its business, were they more followed by religious characters.

Now, though this is undoubtedly true, yet if Christians follow their respective callings upon the same principles, with the same motives, and to the same ends, with the men of the world—if their Christian profession does not in some discernible point display its influence—as no distinction can be perceived, no difference can be made. The line is not drawn —they must be classed with the followers of this world.

The inquiry being thus narrowed within proper limits, we are instructed that the conformity with this world, against which Christians are exhorted, is to be sought for, chiefly, in

the accommodations, indulgences, and gratifications with which the present life is provided by the goodness of God. But as the rational and thankful enjoyment of heaven's mercies can never be charged with guilt, it must be in the excess or abuse of them that the world transgresses, and in which the Christian is exhorted not to be conformed to its example.

Thus is the inquiry brought to a point, my brethren, and to such a point as puts within the reach of every serious Christian, the ready determination of this very and increasingly important subject. Whatever exceeds the measure of temperance in enjoyment, whatever amounts to extravagance in self-indulgence, whatever is inordinate in the desire or pursuit—as in all these respects, what is here styled "this world" plainly and visibly transgresses against the voice of reason and religion, therefore, the Christian is exhorted to pursue a different course, and one more conformable to his high and heavenly calling—to his holy profession.

That this method of deciding between conformity and non-conformity with the world is amply sufficient for all practical purposes, will be evident from an example. In the lawful endeavor to better his condition in the world, and provide for the wants and accommodations of the present life, the gospel enjoins upon the Christian, industry, care, and diligence. But if, in the performance of this necessary duty, his affections become filled with the love of money, either for its own sake, or through desire of the indulgences of which it is the ready minister—hardening his heart and closing his hand against the poor and needy, or tempting him to unrighteous gain through extortion and fraud, for the gratification of sensual indulgence—the use degenerates into the abuse; the "love of the world and of the things that are in it," supersedes "the love of the Father," and conformity with the course of its idolatry and folly marks him in the number of those who, being unfaithful in the unrighteous mammon, shall not be entrusted with the true riches. In like manner, my brethren, of every duty relative to our wordly condition, and of every enjoyment permitted us in it. If the pursuit of it interferes with the higher duties we owe to God and our neighbor, or the indulgence in it endangers the interests of our immortal souls, it amounts to that sinful

conformity to this world against which we are exhorted in the words of my text. The Christian's charter as to the things of the world is liberal and bountiful—"God giveth us all things richly to enjoy." But as they are only shadows of better things, types of a better and more enduring substance, and, as such, a part of our trial, the Christian is affectionately exhorted "to use this world as not abusing it—to make to himself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," in order to ensure the true riches.

Doubtless it has been the secret wish of many besides myself, that the Scriptures had been so framed as to enumerate and point out the various details which are embraced in the general principles therein laid down for our direction. Particularly in the case under consideration are we disposed to wish that the apostle had minutely described the component parts of this wide extended and growing corruption of the gospel. But it is a weak, though, I trust, not a wicked wish, my brethren. Sufficient is done for us, if we would only make that honest application of divine counsel which its importance calls for. But, alas! "we come not to the light, lest our deeds should be reproved." The world, indeed, is mighty, its temptations powerful, and its rewards enticing; but it passeth away, and no place shall be found for it. Let the Christian, then, look beyond. Let him direct the eye of faith to an incorruptible inheritance of glory made ready for every good and faithful servant. Thus shall the temptations of the world lose their power, and the counsel of God's holy word be sufficient to guide him through their seducing vanities, to keep him from conformity with its unhallowed ways, and to bring him in triumph to everlasting habitations of never-ending felicity.

As we can thus derive from the Scriptures what is amply sufficient to instruct us on the duty of non-conformity with the world, so are we also furnished with means to draw that line of separation between the world and religion, which must not be passed over if we would retain our Christian character. And here, my brethren, as the main difficulty of the present times arises from the gaieties and amusements of the world, I shall confine myself to them. The question, then, is: How far can the Christian partake of them? To this

I answer, In so far as they are not in themselves sinful, or have no tendency to lead to sin in others, the Christian can freely partake of them: beyond this he cannot go. But another question arises. Things in themselves innocent become criminal by excess. Can the Christian partake of what is innocent, and leave the excess to the world? To this I answer, No: the Christian cannot consistently countenance that, over the excess and abuse of which he has no control. But, not to multiply examples, as the gaieties and amusements contended for all savor of extravagance and dissipation, it is but to inquire whence they sprung and by whom they are delighted in and followed, to put to flight the sophistry that would plead for them as becoming among Christians. Are they of Heathen or of Christian origin? Are they of GOD or of the world? Do the godly or the ungodly delight in and follow them? And as the answer shall in truth be, so let the line be drawn by every serious Christian, and, when drawn, observed. For by what other name than "conformity with this world" can it be called, when professing Christians are found partaking of the revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, which the profane and irreligious follow and delight in? Is it by such a use of the mercies of GOD that they "present their bodies to him as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable?" Or is it not rather "yielding their members, as instruments of unrighteousness, unto sin?" Upon the same principle may the line be drawn in all other cases, the excess in which is sinful. And if this shall be faithfully done by professing Christians, a great reproach will be rolled away from the religion of the gospel, and the ungodly (this world) the sooner be ashamed of their frivolous and sinful dissipations.

I come now to conclude with an enforcement of the duty from the obligations we come under as professing Christians.

And, here, my brethren, while I feel grieved that an enforcement of this duty should be so universally necessary, and particularly grieved, that so many who call themselves Episcopalians should stand in need of edification on this point, I am happy that no just view of the religion we profess gives any countenance or support to this error.

This is evidenced by the whole tenor of the gospel. As

"Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world," so separation from the world, dedication to the service of God, and obedience unto life, are the conditions on which the promises of God are made to us. "Wherefore, come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty."

As this is evidenced by the whole tenor of the gospel, so is it confirmed by the entire structure of our faith and form of professing it. Of this a more striking illustration cannot be given than is afforded in that solemn sacrament, which is the commencement of the Christian life, and whereby alone we are taken out of the world and adopted into the family of God. As this divine institution is the seal of our regeneration, or renewal of the Holy Ghost, all religious instruction, exhortation, and endeavor is grafted upon it, nor is it possible to present a Scriptural hope to a fallen creature, which is not founded on the promises then made, and the obligations then undertaken. Would to God that all those who have received its seal would but consider more seriously the high responsibilities they have come under, the grace they are slighting, and the judgment they are in hourly danger of encountering!

Now I take upon me to say, that the most prominent obligation undertaken at our baptism, is, non-conformity with the world. "Dost thou renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow nor be led by them?" "I renounce them all," says the applicant for baptism, whether adult or infant. "I renounce the devil," as the god of this world. "I renounce the world" itself, in the lust of the eyes and the pride of life; and "I renounce the sinful desires of the flesh," in those gratifications which are earthly, sensual, and devilish. What shall we say, then, to these things, my brethren? How shall baptized persons make void their own solemn contract with Almighty God? How shall professing Christians escape from their repeatedly ratified renunciation of the world over the

broken body and shed blood of their Redeemer and Saviour? My baptized hearers, there is no escape from this obligation. My professing brethren, there is no escape from this duty but at the peril of your immortal souls. You have put your hand to the plough, and must not look back. "Holiness to the LORD" is stamped upon every baptized forehead with the seal of the SPIRIT. Wash not out the sacred mark with the pollutions of the world! Rather, O rather, renew and refresh the fading impression in that atoning blood which cleanseth from all sin; and be entreated by the mercies of GOD "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto GOD, which is your reasonable service; and be not conformed to this world."

In a very particular manner is this subject, and the duties which grow out of it, pressed upon the most serious attention of those who have this day publicly taken upon themselves and renewed with GOD their baptismal engagements in the rite of confirmation. Having solemnly, with their own mouth and consent, and openly before the Church, renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil, they can no longer be seen in the idol's temple without a surrender of every thing that marks either the sacredness or the consistency of a Christian profession, and without incurring the far more fearful risk of grieving the HOLY SPIRIT, and quenching his good motions in their hearts, to the decay and downfall of the religious principle, to the destruction of that good hope which the gospel imparts to the sincere and faithful, and to the substitution of that miserable delusion, of a form of godliness without the power thereof, under which so many, who will be the friends of the world, are deceiving their own souls. But, my brethren, who have this day witnessed a good confession, keep in mind to what you are now pledged, that you may adorn your Christian profession; for only by enduring to the end can you reap the reward laid up for you in the heavenly kingdom of your Saviour, who warns you—"If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." You must, indeed, go back to your respective callings in the world; you must meet the temptations incident to your state of trial. But you go back armed against their power, and furnished to resist their seductions, with the promises of GOD

renewed, and the help of the Holy Spirit pledged, and the aid and countenance, and the counsel and the prayers, of the people of God, engaged for your encouragement and support. Above all, your Redeemer takes you by the hand and bids you look to his example, and thence learn how to overcome the world; and to strengthen you against its most powerful snares, he tells you to "be faithful unto death, and he will give you a crown of life."

SERMON XXXI.

PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.

MATTHEW XXV. 14—30.

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents, went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one, went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents, came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained besides them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came, and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents besides them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came, and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This is a long text, my friends, but I am very sure that none but inspired wisdom could say so much in as few words. Were it proper to speak absolutely and without qualification of the importance to us of different passages in the Holy Scriptures, I should not hesitate to pronounce that one which I have just read, of more value than any other. But as it

would be presumptuous to give an unqualified preference to a part, where all is of vital interest and unspeakable value, I will only say this, that for practical use and general application it is more happily and wisely adapted than any other single passage in the word of God.

The mysterious doctrines of our religion, by which I mean those which are above our reason, and derive their value and importance to us from their Author, and from their intimate connexion with the whole plan of redemption—such as the doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation of the second person in that ineffable union, the resurrection of the body, the operation of divine grace in our hearts, with many others that might be named—deserve all the attention which Christians can give them, and are to be received and believed, simply on the authority of the Revealer. The preceptive parts of Christianity, also, being consonant to the highest reason, and the purest morality, and productive of all the happiness mortals can attain to, demand, on the ground both of duty and of interest, the most hearty and diligent observance. Yet they nevertheless want that familiar application to each one's personal concerns, that concentration, if I may so speak, of all that both doctrine and precept lead to, which we find in the parable of the talents. So lively and forcible is the lesson therein contained, that no one can read it attentively, without feeling the immediate bearing it has upon himself, as an accountable creature; without perceiving, at a glance, as it were, the sum and substance of the religion of the gospel, and the exceeding goodness of God our Saviour in furnishing accountable creatures for that judgment, whose equitable rule is manifested in the parable, by example.

The great purpose of the present life, and the object of public instruction from the pulpit, being to awaken men to the care of their souls, and to prepare them for another and a better, to that end I shall consider the parable in my text, not in a minute subdivision of the doctrines, but as a general fund of instruction and exhortation.

By the word "talent" we are not to understand any one particular qualification or advantage, either temporal or spiritual, either of mind, body, or estate; but, whatever in the present life can be applied to promote the glory of God, and

the good of our fellow creatures. This is the best practical explanation of the word which I can give you; the most comprehensive in its application; the most consonant with the duties arising from the unequal condition of this life, which it is one great object of Christianity to equalize; and the one which agrees the most perfectly with the equity of that judgment, in which we shall all soon have to meet our GOD. This, my friends, is what gives to this passage of Scripture its peculiar force and impression. Do what we will, we can escape from the fairness and reasonableness of its application no otherwise, than by putting away from us every religious consideration, and desperately shutting our eyes, and closing our ears, and hardening our hearts, against the united testimony of revelation and conscience.

Another remark, more applicable to this parable, perhaps, than to any which our LORD put forth, and well worthy of your notice, is this—there is in it no difficulty of interpretation. The moral is not hid in the depth of the allusion, nor can an erroneous mystical meaning be drawn from it. It comes home to the every day business of human life; sets before us, in a manner not to be mistaken, one grand and leading principle for the regulation of conduct, embracing every possible condition in this our probationary state; and presents religion to our notice and regard, not as a system of speculative truth, but as a faithful, active, and diligent improvement of whatever GOD hath been pleased to bestow upon us.

This much may suffice as to the importance of the parable itself. The instruction we may draw from it, is as follows:

I. First. Whatever our condition in the present life may be, it is the appointment of a wise and gracious GOD, who proportions his gifts, not by an arbitrary and capricious choice, but by the fixed and settled order of that Providence in which he governs the universe; and with a foresight of the part each individual has to act. This is clearly pointed out to us in the commencement of the parable—"He called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods; to every man according to his several ability."

This doctrine, we are all ready enough to admit; but we do not extend it as far as we ought, being disposed to confine it to those qualifications of mind and body which are con-

fessedly not of our own procuring in any sense, such as beauty or deformity of person, health and strength of body, soundness of mind, with all the grades of genius, as it is called, in other words, a capacity to acquire knowledge, either generally or in some particular branch of science, together with situations in life, productive of events, whether good or evil, which leave a permanent character behind them. These, and such like, we readily enough attribute, at least in words, to the special gift of GOD. But to entertain this doctrine as we ought, we must include much more; even all that is not evidently the result of our own crimes and follies. These last, indeed, are provided, both for and against, in the infinite comprehension of GOD's overruling wisdom; but they can never be considered as talents, that is, as improveable gifts; for in so doing, we should make GOD the author of sin. Hence, my brethren, we are instructed, that our original condition, as respects the advantages or disadvantages of birth and fortune, the moral qualities of temper and disposition, the means, time, and opportunity afforded, are all in the number of those gifts of GOD, here represented to us by the word "talent." To the inquiry, why to one is given five, to another two, and to another one? we can give no other answer, than that infinite goodness and wisdom so willed; nor are we concerned to know. Indeed, no benefit could arise from the knowledge, beyond the satisfaction of a vain curiosity. The point of wisdom for us to be engaged about is, the number and magnitude of those committed to ourselves. We have not to answer for each other—"Every one shall give account of himself to GOD."

II. Secondly. We are instructed from the text, that whatever we possess, be it more or be it less, is not our own, in the sense we attach to ownership. All should be considered as the property of the "Giver of every good and perfect gift," to be used in his service, and applied according to his direction. We hold in trust, my brethren, and a trust of a complicated nature.

First, and in the highest sense, to the use, honor, and glory of the giver. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of GOD;" which means, briefly, this—to keep a continual sense of GOD upon our minds, and truly to

intend and earnestly to promote the advancement of his kingdom among men, in the prevalence of righteousness, mercy, and truth in the world.

Secondly, to our own benefit and advantage, in a temperate, thankful use of his blessings, and in a diligent improvement of whatever he has bestowed upon us, "God giveth us all things richly, to enjoy." He debars us from nothing that is not in some shape hurtful to us. Of this, our own experience, as well as that of others, is a constant witness. And it is a mistaken view of the Christian doctrine of self-denial, or mortification of the body, which extends it to things innocent in themselves, and possessing no tendency, either directly or by consequence, to injure us in soul, body, or estate. But though this is undoubtedly true, yet such is the fatal propensity of our fleshly minds to run to excess in the indulgence of appetite, in the pursuit of pleasure, falsely so called, that it is safer to follow St. Paul's example, and "to keep the body under;" rather to abridge our gratifications, yea, to deny ourselves in things lawful and permitted, than to risk their becoming an occasion of falling in ourselves or a stumbling block to others. "No man liveth unto himself;" so that even our enjoyments partake of the character of duties, and must be regulated by the effect they are calculated to produce, both on ourselves and others.

Thirdly: we hold our worldly advantages, indeed our spiritual ones also, in trust for the benefit of others. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is the sum and substance of the second table, as it is called, of God's law. On which I will only observe, that the least that can be allowed concerning this duty, is, that the principle be as strong as our self-love. A hard saying, my brethren, and no otherwise to be fulfilled, than by the succor and help of God's Holy Spirit! For however natural it may be, that children of the same family should love one another, yet so strong is self, that "with men it is impossible, though not with God."

In this trust for others there are also degrees.

First, our own families. "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, (or kindred,) he hath denied the faith (perverted the gospel) and is worse than an infidel."

Next, for our Christian brethren. "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

Thirdly, for the poor and needy, the suffering and afflicted. "Pure religion, before GOD and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

This, my brethren, is to give our LORD's money to the exchangers, in the genuine sense. And it is not without purpose and connexion, that this weighty parable immediately precedes the description of the judgment of the great day. "I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; I was naked and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." "LORD, when saw we thee in such case, and did not minister to thee?" "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." O what a beautiful and touching representation is this, my brethren, of the interest our LORD takes in his people! What an affecting application of his last commandment, that we "should love one another even as he loved us!" And behold how wisely he hath provided, that none should consider themselves exempt from the duty, because of the smallness of their means. "For," says he, "whoever shall give to drink, unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

III. A third head of instruction which we may draw from the text is, the necessity of consideration. "Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents."

Hence we learn, that the person to whom they were given made his own individual condition, the advantages he was possessed of, the subject of careful consideration; otherwise he could never have ascertained what he was entrusted with so as to make the required use of them. This, my brethren, lies at the root of all advancement or improvement of condition, whether temporal or spiritual. Experience teaches us that, even in worldly things, there can be no success, no increase, no improvement, without considering carefully what our means are for the attainment of any proposed end; and then applying them steadily and diligently to that end.

Worldly men are well aware of the advantage of singleness

of intention, of having one main leading object in view and directing their thoughts and efforts chiefly to its advancement, bending every circumstance in life to the one purpose which occupies their desire. And herein "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light;" for rarely indeed, are *they* disappointed, who thus lay themselves out for a portion in time. How much more strongly, then, does this apply to our spiritual concerns! How much more deserving of serious consideration and diligent engagement are our everlasting interests! How deeply are we all interested to ascertain what is entrusted to us, when it is so expressly set before us that improvement and nothing but improvement, will be accepted at our hands. Even the unprofitable servant appears to have considered and reasoned on his particular trust, "Lord, I knew that thou wert a hard man." He was aware that if he wasted and abused his lord's goods he would be punished. To guard, therefore, against that, he went and hid his talent in the earth. When called to account, he returned what was committed to him safe and uninjured, "Lo, there thou hast that is thine." But, alas! it was unimproved, and therefore could not be received.

Oh! what a lesson, my hearers, should this be to us all. If simple neglect, if inadvertence and inconsideration, are thus criminal, and consigned to "outer darkness, to weeping and gnashing of teeth," what must be the unutterable misery of those who are spendthrifts alike of temporal and spiritual treasure? Who to carelessness, neglect, and light estimation of what is committed to them, add waste and abuse, perversion and prostitution of God's mercies—call their talents their own, and in the face of warning and example lay them out in the purchase of eternal death? "O consider this, ye that forget God," while it is yet in your power to redeem the time by repentance.

IV. The fourth and last point I shall present for your instruction is, the fairness and equity of God's method of dealing with his creatures. He requires only in proportion as he gives, and he rewards according to the improvement made. "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." This passage of Scripture, as it

is the moral of the parable, can be explained and understood no otherwise than of the improvement which, as rational, accountable beings, we are bound, both by duty and interest, to make of what GOD is pleased to bestow upon us in the present life; and the proceeding is so accordant with our natural notions of right, that we act upon it, even instinctively, in whatever it applies to. How fair and equitable, then, that GOD should measure out to us by the same rule! "Take heed, therefore, for with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

Some of us, perhaps, may be disposed to think with the unprofitable servant that our LORD is "a hard man." But it is not so, my friends, either in fact or yet in our thoughts. Almighty GOD is a fair and bountiful master; yea, our GOD is merciful, of which every soul present is a proof. He requires nothing of us beyond what he gives us ability to perform, neither is it true that we think him a hard master. Hard and severe masters are generally very punctually obeyed and diligently served; and such would be the effect upon us were it our real sentiment. But, on the contrary, the secret thought of too many is, that he is more merciful than his own word declares him to be; taking license from this delusion to sin openly against him; drawing from the death and sufferings of his dear Son, not a proof of GOD's indescribable hatred of sin, but an argument to sin more securely; and thus making CHRIST the minister of sin, and "turning the grace of GOD into lasciviousness," by laying the flattering unction to their souls, that after all they shall escape the eternal punishment of GOD's revealed wrath. But let such think this with themselves again, that if simple neglect—failure to improve—is justly sufficient to drive those who thus act, from his presence for ever—if it includes a forfeiture of the reward offered by grace to faith and obedience through the merits of CHRIST—how much more shall waste and abuse of his mercies, contempt of his word and commandment, and open rebellion against his righteous government, draw down upon them the full tempest of his wrath and vengeance? "Who, then, may abide the day of his coming?" "LORD! who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; he that walketh uprightly and worketh

righteousness;" he that by the improvement of his talent hath "laid up in store a good foundation against the time to come" —who, by care and diligence, hath "made his calling and election sure," and attained to that "holiness, without which no man shall see the LORD."

Thus, my brethren and friends, may we draw from the parable in my text instruction as to the nature of our present life; the bearing it has upon that which is to come; the condition on which we hold the varied mercies of GOD's bountiful providence; the account we have to render of them, and the unspeakable consequences which await the use we shall make of them. One leading thought is throughout pressed upon our attention, and that is, improvement, increase, advancement—in other words, growth in grace. Without this the moral of the parable shows us that there is no hope—no good hope, no assurance—none whatever. "LORD, thou deliveredst unto me five talents, behold, I have gained besides them five talents more." "Well done." "LORD, thou deliveredst unto me one talent, and I feared thee and went and hid thy talent in the earth, here it is." "Thou wicked and slothful servant." And I notice it the rather, singly and by itself, that it may reach your attention and help to cut up by the roots the delusion under which so many labor, that if they do no harm, as it is called, if they are orderly and decent in outward behaviour, refrain from the more gross and out-breaking practice of sin and wickedness, from the vain dissipations of a thoughtless world, and are in fellowship with some denomination of professing Christians, all is well—they are in a safe way of salvation. But what says my text, brethren? Where is the increase I had a right to expect? Where is the good it was in the power of thine hand to do with my goods? Wherefore didst thou not give my money to the exchangers? Take the unproductive servant and cast him into outer darkness! Alas! my brethren, let us be no longer secure because we are free from the rankness of that sin which rules in the children of disobedience. When we have done all, we are taught to consider ourselves as unprofitable servants; but if we come short of that improvement which GOD justly requires of us, we shall be, not only unprofitable, but unproductive, withered, unfruitful branches, fit

for nothing but to be cast into the fire and burned. Oh! let this awakening truth do away the fatal propensity of our fallen nature to curtail the duties of our religious state, and pare down the standard of the gospel to our own unholy measure! Let it startle us to consider afresh what GOD hath committed to our trust, and, with a fixed conviction that it must be improved at the peril of our souls, let it strengthen us to cut off the right hand, to pluck out the right eye, of our selfish desires and unsanctified affections, putting our trust in GOD for the power to do what he requires of us! And let those who consume their time and lay out their means in the pursuit of pleasure and amusement in the fashionable follies and giddy unthinking vanities of the times—who are altogether opposed to the wise restraints and salutary self-denials of the gospel, and ask, Where is the harm in a little innocent mirth and recreation? as they term the round of folly;—let such look here and then answer their own question! Let them then say whether there is not a cause why the ministers of CHRIST should lift up their voices like a trumpet to show them their danger.

Fruitful as this particular parable is, in matter "for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," and well as it would repay a wider and longer range of consideration, I must leave the further improvement of it in this way to your own sense of its importance. What I have said upon it will, I trust, be helpful to your private meditations. Remember, that whatever you have or are, will be required at your hands with increase; that the various talents of reason and understanding, of condition in life, of wealth and influence, are all gifts, improvable to the glory of GOD and the good of men; that your children and servants, your relations and neighbors, are not only in themselves talents committed specially to your care, but instruments for the improvement and application of reason, condition in life, wealth and influence, to the spread and advancement, the increase and establishment, of religion in the world. Remember, above all, that the precious talent of the gospel is yours; "the wisdom that cometh down from above," "the hope that maketh not ashamed." Let each one of you, then, "as a partaker of the manifold grace of GOD," apply this parable to himself. And

herein will be your true wisdom, my friends, for it will most surely be applied to you, in that awful judgment, which the vanishing away of our passing days brings nearer and nearer to each one of us. O that this undoubted fact may lead us all to think more deeply of the great and comprehensive talent of time, that it neither waits nor returns, and that it ends in eternity.

Let me then exhort you, by the worth of your immortal souls, by the goodness of GOD, by the love of CHRIST, by all the mercies of your condition, by the strict account you must give of them, by the shortness and uncertainty of life, by the infinite disproportion between things temporal and eternal, yea, by the waste already committed in your trust estate; let me beseech you to lay near your hearts the solemn truths now presented to you. To many of us, my brethren, the day is far spent, the night is at hand, the judge is at the door. O let these things speak to us of preparing to meet our GOD! Let us honestly examine our state. Of what possible advantage can it be for a rational creature to deceive himself in this great concern? What can compensate for the loss of our souls? Let them speak in the same warning voice to those, who with greener years fairly look for a longer trial. The young have their talents also to improve, and their account to give in, and not unfrequently at a short notice. Now, then, is the time to turn and escape for your lives, before the blinding, hardening influence of sin and folly have made escape difficult, if not impossible.

Let me exhort you, in particular, against the prevailing delusion of your years—that you have time in store,—that "your LORD delayeth his coming." The parable, indeed, tells us, that it was after a long time, that the lord of those servants came and reckoned with them. But it tells us also, that he did come, and called for their accounts. To you also he will come, my younger hearers, and "ye know neither the day nor the hour. Be ye therefore also ready, your loins girt about and your lights burning," that ye may go in with your LORD to the marriage; for "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry; and behold, his reward is with him, to give to every one according as his work shall be." What that work must be, to receive his heart-cheering, life-giving

"well done," is set before us in the most familiar and convincing manner in my text, and so plainly that he that runs may read.

Let me exhort you, then, no longer to turn a deaf ear to that warning word, which is "able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in CHRIST JESUS;" and let what you have heard teach you, that the religion of the gospel is not a set of abstract notions contained in the head, nor yet a system of doctrines entertained in the belief, neither does it consist in any outward name or profession among Christians, but in such a hearty reception of revealed truth as leads the heart to GOD, and draws out the life in obedience to his commandments; an active, living principle of accountable duty. As such, seek after and improve this and all your talents.

In the revolution of time, there is much of warning to a serious mind. In the close of one year and commencement of another, there is much for meditation to work profitably upon. To me it speaks loudly of the account I must ere long give in, not only for myself but for others; for you, my brethren and hearers, it tells me, at a double peril, not to hide my LORD'S talent in the earth; not to be negligent in providing that ye may have these things, these practical things of religion, faithfully pressed upon you. It speaks to me of greater diligence and more earnestness in my calling; it inquires of me, How many talents hast thou added to thy LORD'S stock? Alas! my brethren, what a small amount in the whole! How little in the past year! But praised be GOD that there is any! And though the improvement hitherto made in this portion of his vineyard is of small amount, let us put our trust in GOD for better times; let us hope that those who are in darkness will yet awake to the light of his marvellous truth, and "arise and shake themselves from the dust;" that Zion will, even here, yet "put on her beautiful garments," and be a praise among men.

My brethren and hearers, may that merciful GOD who hath called us to the knowledge of his grace—that compassionate Saviour who hath paid our ransom with his own blood—that enlightening, sanctifying SPIRIT whom he hath sent into the world to abide with his Church, guide, govern, and keep us, to the glory of his name on earth, and to the blessedness of his presence in heaven. AMEN.

SERMON XXXII.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

Luke viii. 15.

But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

The parable of the sower, my brethren, is exceedingly instructive, awakening, and profitable; inasmuch as it affords to every man the certain means of ascertaining what effect God's message of mercy to the world by his Son has had upon himself, and also to what cause its want of effect, should that be the case, is to be ascribed; whether to careless, way-side hearing, to superficial consideration when heard and received, or to absorption in the cares and pleasures of the world. In presenting us, moreover, with a single test of religious condition, it simplifies the duty of self examination, and enables every individual, by attending to his growth in grace, to form a just estimate of his interest in the Christian salvation. This test is contained in the words of my text, and lays down this sure position, that improvement of Christian advantages is the only safe criterion of Christian hope, the only ground of a just and reasonable assurance in the momentous concerns of immortality. In this it runs parallel with the parable of the talents, and, in the union of their joint moral, establishes the practical doctrine, that the religion of the gospel is the active discharge of our duties to God and each other, from proper motives and with reasonable expectations.

It presents us, therefore, with a subject of profitable improvement, in considering,

First, the influence of natural disposition on the reception of divine truth.

Secondly, how far external conduct is to be relied upon as a proof of religion.

Thirdly, what constitutes the sure test, upon which we may safely depend.

"But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

I. First, I am to consider the influence of natural disposition on the reception of divine truth.

That this will be in opposition, may be asserted without any fear of contradiction; individual experience being the living witness of the fact. But of what character that opposition will be, whether of mere indifference, of careless neglect, of contrary pursuit, or of actual hostility, will depend on original difference of temperament, modified by the adventitious circumstances of early education and worldly occupation.

It is, indeed, of little consequence, as to the event, to what cause opposition to divine truth may be ascribed, provided it continues; but it is of great consequence to know, that some natural tempers, as well as some worldly pursuits and occupations, are more or less indisposed to those motives and arguments, which are calculated to counteract this tendency, and by the aid of divine grace to overcome it; because upon this must depend, both the exertion to be put forth by the individual, and the application of the necessary means by others.

While, however, we thus state, without any qualification, the averseness and opposition of our fallen and perverted natures to the things of God and religion, we do not mean to say, that it is an aversion and opposition which cannot be overcome, or which presents any extenuation of guilt. On the contrary, we present it to you, and press it upon you, to awaken and alarm you, and to induce you to resort to those means, by which only this mortal malady can be arrested and cured. For there is provision made in the gospel of Christ against all the variety of this original taint and corruption of our nature, and—let us hear it with the deepest impression—it is no where else to be found.

Hence we are able to account for that difference, both in kind and degree, of opposition to divine truth, which is observable among men. The natural man "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; he is simply indisposed to consider and entertain them. The sensual man not only receives

them not, but "they are foolishness unto him" compared with present delights. The worldly man cannot receive them, his heart is gone after its covetousness, the idol fills the temple, and there is no room for them. While the actual unbeliever not only does not receive them, but rejects them with loathing, and, at the same time, with a strange mixture of fear and dread.

Whence, then, cometh the "honest and good heart," which both receives, and retains, and improves, divine truth? My answer is, that it is the fruit of sound instruction, wise restraint, serious consideration, earnest prayer, and diligent endeavor, made effectual by the SPIRIT of GOD, to this happy end. So far, then, it is put within the reach of every one of us, and we are without excuse, if we have not attained it, or are not seriously striving for it.

Hence we learn how the neglect of these essential duties operates to increase this corruption of our nature, even to the hatred of GOD and religion—in other words, how we become "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." And hence opens upon us the wide and binding obligation of parental duty, in the nurture and admonition of families. With parents it rests, to give to the natural disposition, while tender and pliant, a direction towards GOD; to train it heaven-ward; to cultivate and prune it, that it may bear good fruit; to apply the counteracting influence of early instruction, watchful restraint, and good example. These GOD enjoins, and has promised to bless, and without these the hope is wild and unwarranted, that there will be any fear of GOD, or conformity to his holy will.

It may, indeed, be otherwise in the sovereignty of divine grace, but this cannot be counted upon; and where it does take place, it releases not from guilt those who have neglected the more ordinary, rational, and scriptural means, in the right use of which the end would have been more surely attained.

O Christian parents! yes, and parents who are not Christians! what a weight is upon you, from which you cannot escape! What an obligation, for which you must answer with your souls! and what precious promises and blessed hopes are yours, if you fulfil your duty! Have you ever realized them? Have you ever thought of them beyond the little

minute I was pressing them upon you? O that I could engrave them upon your hearts! O that God would give me wherewithal to move you—a tongue of fire, or a lip of persuasion! "For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life." And wo to that pestilent doctrine, which, in its perhaps unintended but necessary effect, hath paralyzed this duty, and spread the double murder of growing infidelity over the land! Alas! when I look around me, and see so many young persons, for whose worldly condition every pains hath been taken, but who manifest no concern for their souls, what am I to think! That their parents have been faithful in this duty? Alas! no. For then God must be unrighteous to forget his promise to this work and labor of love. O let us humble ourselves before him, and confess our sin, and implore his grace to counteract our past neglect, and form in these young persons the honest and good heart, which shall receive the truth in the love of it, and to bless our earnest endeavors to amend this great defect, for the time to come. Thus shall repentance bring forth fruits meet for it, and a visitation of mercy "add to the Church such as shall be saved."

II. Secondly, I am to consider how far external conduct is to be relied upon as a proof of religion.

That the inward or governing principle of the mind will, in some shape or other, be manifested by the outward behaviour of the man, is just as certain, my brethren and hearers, as that the tree is known by its fruit. Where we see a continued course of thoughtlessness, and levity, and sin, and folly, in the behaviour of any individual, there is no difficulty in determining that there is nothing of the religious principle in the heart: the tree is not made good. But it will not, therefore, follow—as at first sight it would appear to do—that external conduct is what we are alone or chiefly to look to as the proof of the religious principle being formed and active in our hearts. From the nature of things, the root is before the branches: principle, therefore, must precede practice. It is undoubtedly true, however, that every man, whatever his condition may be, can give the negative proof that the religious principle is formed in his heart, by abstaining from sin. But it may not be equally in his power to give

the positive proof of it by actions directly good. These must depend upon ability and opportunity—neither of which may be present, though the principle from which good works flow may be enjoyed. And this necessarily follows from the great variety of circumstances in which men are placed, and to which their outward behaviour is subjected. Outward conduct, therefore, though good evidence of the want of the religious principle, is not always to be relied upon as the only safe and just evidence for it.

This will be confirmed by a case which is too common, and in which outward conduct is no measure of religious principle; and that is, when the conduct springs from motives and reasons which have no reference to religion at all.

A very bad man may be externally forward in what are called good works; many notorious, outbreaking sinners are yet humane in temper, and liberal to the poor. A man completely irreligious at heart, and owning himself such, may, for the sake of character and respect in the world, for the sake of advantage, or from the fear of loss, from constitutional temperament, and from a multitude of considerations separate from any religious impression, be both forward and liberal in doing good, and cautious of giving offence by doing evil. Yea, how many amiable and excellent persons do we all know, who, in their outward deportment, are a reproach to professing Christians, yet have no more to do with religion, no more intimacy with its exercises and ordinances, than the seats they sit upon.

In examining ourselves, therefore, with a view of knowing the real condition of our souls—the truth of our spiritual condition in the sight of God, and in respect of salvation, it is neither enough, nor is it safe, to take into the account only our external conduct. What comports with religious duty may in good part be found there, and after all prove a most miserable deception. Yet we know by experience, that it is the delusion under which thousands are posting hoodwinked to eternity. They do no harm, they do all the good they can, they see no great difference between their walk in life and that of Christians, and they hope to be saved even as others. But they never inquire into the principle on which that hope rests. They search not the Scriptures for the con-

ditions on which salvation is limited to man. They strive not to enter in at the strait gate. There is no conflict even with worldly interest. What they do, they do to be seen of men; and they have their reward in the complacency and self-satisfaction of their own hearts, and in the praise of men. But, my brethren, this is not the master key which opens the gate of eternal life to a sinner. This is not that which renders even good works acceptable to GOD. There is a better way to determine this mighty interest, which I now show unto you, by considering, as was proposed,

III. Thirdly, what constitutes the sure test upon which we may safely depend.

Now this consists, under every variety of disposition and condition, in *the union of a right motive with a good action.* Where these meet, the fruit is perfect. Where they are separated, the best action, the greatest good that ever was done, has no moral or rewardable quality in the sight of GOD. As the motive or principle, therefore, alone sanctifies the action, and that can only be seated in the heart, to our hearts we must look, in the first and chief place, for the marks and tokens of religion, for the evidence that we are in the right way. "That on the good ground are they, who, in an honest and good heart, bring forth fruit with patience."

If, therefore, we are not conscious of that change of heart which gives a new direction to all our thoughts and to all our actions—that "secret of the LORD," that "hidden man of the heart," that "birth from above," as the inspired writers term it—the most splendid series of good actions that can be performed can have no religious quality: "If I give all my goods to feed the poor, and even my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Hence we may learn, my brethren, how it is that actions which to our view are exactly alike, may, nevertheless, both in themselves and in the sight of GOD, be altogether opposite; how the widow's mite, and the ostentatious offering of the wealthy Pharisee, were infinitely removed from each other in His estimation whose judgment is ever according to truth.

And hence also we may learn what is the sure test to which to bring our spiritual state; that if we would enjoy the comfort and assurance of the gospel, we must not only be

rich in good works, but rich also in that spiritual root from which alone all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed.

It is faith working by love, my brethren, that adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour here upon earth; but it is love, mighty through faith to regain a heavenly inheritance, that sits down forever at the right hand of God. Let us not attempt to separate, then, what God hath joined, but, in their holy union, "prove what is that perfect and acceptable will of God, in which he hath chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

I will now proceed to apply what has been said, by some practical inferences from the subject.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence," saith the wise man, "for out of it are the issues of life." "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies," saith the Saviour, "and these are the things which defile a man." "If our heart condemn us," saith the apostle, "God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things." "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God."

Connected with my text, and with what hath been said, these passages of Scripture may serve to impress us with the duty of looking carefully to the seat of all religion—the heart. My brethren and hearers, religion, the saving religion of Jesus Christ, is a vital principle; and whatever of scoff and mockery may be cast upon it, it is only in this character that it is worth seeking or worth having. The state of our hearts, then, on the subject of religion, must be of great importance, as it must also be to have some marks by which to determine whether at all, and to what extent, it has any influence upon us.

Now one of these marks, and that a very conclusive one, is seriousness; seriousness of the heart, not occasionally excited, but abiding. The man or the woman, who does not find him or herself serious on the subject of religion, can draw but one conclusion, and that is, that as yet they have neither part nor lot in the matter. If the judgment of Almighty God at the last day, which we must all meet—if the difference between being saved and being lost, being accepted

in the beloved or cast off into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched—if these things will not make us serious, then it is most certain, either that we do not believe there are any such consequences, or that we have not yet thought of them at all, or that we have forcibly dismissed them from our minds, or that we are so imbued with levity of character that even eternity can make no impression upon us. In any of these cases our condition is next to desperate; we can have no hope hereafter from any thing that Christianity has to offer us.

If our want of seriousness concerning religion is occasioned by our not believing it, there can be no hope of salvation from a religion which we reject. Indeed the mind cannot be affected by what it does not realize; and if the mind is untouched by the realities of a future state, the conduct will be so likewise.

If it be the case with us, as, alas! it is with thousands, that we have not yet thought of these things, and hence are not serious about them, certainly it is high time with every one who hears me, to take the subject home to his deepest consideration. The great events of death and judgment, of heaven and hell, are not at a distance from us. As we draw near the close of our days, they come nearer to every one of us, and are precisely the same as if the day of our death was the day of judgment. Therefore, it is folly in the extreme in any rational being to say he has not thought of religion. It is an answer we sometimes receive; but it is a foolish one—indeed it is worse than foolish, it is highly presumptuous. And yet, do I not look on many who would have to give this answer or none at all? Who have never sat down to count the cost at which their immortal souls are staked in an approaching eternity, nor have given to the revelation of Jesus Christ and him crucified, that serious consideration to which, as the only name under heaven given among men for salvation, it is entitled? Alas! my careless hearers, can religion do you any good while it is a mere matter of occasional speculation, desired perhaps, but never sought, never found? I may sow the word, but of what advantage can it be to the thoughtless way side hearer, who allows the wicked one to catch it away almost as it is sown? With what profit will it

fall on the shallow ground of that heart to which seriousness is a stranger? Alas! should it even spring up, how soon is it blasted and withered in the ungenial climate of the vanities and follies of the world! and how surely is it choked and rendered unfruitful in those whose seriousness is absorbed in the cares of this life! whose hearts bow down before the god of this world! Oh! if it should please GOD to command the pestilence upon us, or infect our atmosphere with death, what thousands would be turned over to the forlorn hope of a death-bed repentance, because religious seriousness is banished from their hearts! And is this impossible? Has it never happened? Ask yourselves, then, seriously, my hearers, can youth, or health, or business, or pleasure, be any excuse for not thinking about religion? Is it of importance only to the old, and infirm, and dying, to be saved? Do the young, and the strong, and the busy, and the dissipated, never die? Can they be saved without religion? or can religion save them without thinking about it? No! Those who are saved, not only receive the word into an honest and good heart, but keep it there. They are "not only hearers, but doers of the word." The man who brings forth fruit with patience, "delights in the law of the LORD, and meditates therein day and night," and is compared to a "tree planted by the rivers of water, which bringeth forth fruit in his season."

Lastly, if want of seriousness on the subject of religion proceed from such a levity of mind as nothing can make any impression upon, the condition is most dangerous. For this levity must be cured before any religious impression can be entertained, and the cure is in the hand of GOD only—in the application of those severe afflictions, which bring the mind to its balance. Then will the solemn considerations which were before made light of and jested at, find room to be entertained, and estimated according to their actual worth; and thus is the visitation of personal suffering very often the greatest kindness, because the only means of begetting seriousness on the subject of religion. Numbers ascribe their first serious impressions to the loss of some dear object, or to some severe bodily suffering; and as all serious persons find that disposition increased by every fresh affliction, this should teach us how necessary such visitations are to us, and how

experimentally David spoke, when he said, "It is good for me, that I have been afflicted." "I know, O LORD, that thou, in very faithfulness, hast afflicted me."

In saying, however, that the remedy for this most dangerous state of mind is in the hand of GOD only, we do not mean to say that nothing can be done, either by the persons themselves or by others, in aid of this most necessary work—for much may be done; and this poor world, amid all its witcheries, is full of proofs, from daily calamity and supervening death, that it is not worth depending on for present pleasure, and that the sum of its gratifications, for the period of its endurance, would be dear bought, at the expense of the soul.

Let us, then, my brethren, treasure up the instruction this parable presents us with. Weekly the sower goes forth to sow. Let us examine carefully into what kind of ground, with what disposition of heart, we receive the good seed of the kingdom. Let us bring that to bear upon the fruit it produces in our outward conduct, and, by their mutual relation to each other, be certified both of the motive from which we act and the end to which we are progressing. Let us do this with the seriousness which eternity demands. So shall we daily ripen for the kingdom which cannot be moved, and, in the harvest of the world, when the tares shall be separated from the wheat, be gathered by the reapers into the garner of the Son of GOD.

SERMON XXXIII.

FRUIT ACCORDING TO SEED SOWN.

GALATIANS vi. 7.

Be not deceived; GOD is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

The influence of the present life upon that which is to come, is here set forth under a similitude which is at once familiar and striking; and, as no one can possibly mistake the application, all are interested to consider its bearing upon their individual condition. We are all busy and attentive, in various manners and degrees, in cultivating the material seed we have committed to the earth, and in pursuing our different worldly occupations. We have sowed in hope, and put forth our various exertions in confidence, that neither seed time nor harvest, nor the fruit of skill, and care, and diligence, shall be disappointed; and in all this we have done what is right, and what is, in truth, our bounden duty. We have none of us, however, expected to gather cotton from peas or corn from cotton, nor yet that the event in any worldly calling should be opposite to the means made use of to attain it. Now I would ask, why have we thus acted and expected? Upon what ground have we thus put forth our labor and skill in our various occupations? And whence is it, that no man hath even looked for an alteration in the kind of his crop, or a result opposite to just expectation in the other pursuits of life? And let the only just answer that can be given—habitual dependence on the fixed order of an unchangeable Providence, in the government of Almighty GOD—open up to us the analogy of my text, and impress our hearts with its importance and equity. For while we are ploughing and sowing, and laboring and striving for time, we are likewise putting in a crop for eternity; and just such as we sow, that shall we also reap. On this day, then, when worldly cares and occupations are interdicted—when the

bustle and turmoil of the world is hushed by the command of GOD—let us endeavor to reap the fruit which a careful consideration of this subject will surely present to us.

"Be not deceived; GOD is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

The doctrine contained in the text is the fundamental doctrine of all religion, the link which connects time and eternity, and a state of reward or punishment with the quality of moral conduct. That every man shall finally receive of GOD according to what he has done in the present life, is a truth of the same certainty and of the same importance with the acknowledgment of the very being of GOD as the Moral Governor of the universe; and only as this is the fixed and full persuasion of our minds, will the claims and duties of religion be respected. Hence the frequency with which the doctrine is repeated in the Scriptures; the earnestness with which it is pressed upon our belief; the various similitudes whereby its connexion with our present conduct is illustrated, and the solemnity of that judgment which shall precede it is represented.

As JESUS CHRIST came to reveal fully the will of GOD for our guidance—to furnish us amply for that life and immortality which is brought to light by the gospel—so did he continually confirm all the obligations of his religion, in the application of this equitable rule of judgment to our actions—"The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with the angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works." "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." And what our LORD himself thus clearly taught, was no less plainly and earnestly inculcated by his apostles. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of CHRIST, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

To imagine, therefore, that any other rule will decide our everlating destiny, is not only to run counter to the express declarations of the Judge himself, but to affront the equity of our own minds, and to render practical, personal religion unimportant, if not impossible. As on this point, however, men are much disposed to evade the plainest declarations of

Scripture, and to resort to some shorter and easier method of salvation than the practice of moral righteousness, the apostle inserts a caution against all such self-deception—"Be not deceived," says he; "God is not mocked." The great purpose of the religion of the gospel being the active love of God, in the attainment, in our measure and degree, of his moral perfections; and the active love of our neighbor, in the exercise of benevolence and brotherly kindness; to expect the favor of the God of love upon any other conditions, is equally fruitless and absurd—as contrary to reason as to expect to reap what we have not sowed. And it is not only thus fruitless and absurd, but an affront also to the perfections of the Almighty, in thinking to impose upon him chaff instead of wheat—the useless pretence of some abstract quality of the mind, instead of the real qualifications of a holy and actively benevolent life. Among such false dependences for the divine favor, may be reckoned as the chief, faith, without its fruits; trust in the mercy of God, without performance of the conditions on which it is promised; reliance on the merits of Christ, without departing from all iniquity; and good intentions put off till to-morrow. These most frequent delusions, as they produce no fruit corresponding with their external denomination, can only be classed according to their real character, by a wise and righteous Judge; and as "his fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor," they will fly before the blast, "like the chaff which the wind scattereth abroad, over the face of the earth." To rely upon such vain expectations, then, is the fatal deception of thinking to deceive God with names instead of things; the miserable delusion of thinking that the supreme Moral Governor of the universe has less regard to the real fruits of religion and virtue in his creatures than to the empty professions of unfruitful acknowledgment of him, and will reward the unprofitable servant equally with him who has improved his talents.

But, whatever vain men may teach or wicked men choose to believe, "God is not mocked." The unchangeable differences of good and evil, of virtue and vice, remain unaltered. The righteous laws of his kingdom remain in full force. The rule of his righteous judgment is fixed, and recorded for our

benefit; and that rule is, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

What, then, are we sowing, my brethren and hearers? what preparation are we making for that great harvest of eternal life or everlasting death, to which each one of us shall be adjudged, according to what we now sow? We read in the verse following my text, "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the SPIRIT, shall of the SPIRIT reap life everlasting." Have we, then, considered, with the seriousness it deserves, this master distinction in our religious condition; and realized what these different pursuits end in? Oh! if we have not, let us now—before that night cometh in which no man can work—let us look our condition in the face! Let us meet the interests of our souls with an honest desire to profit by the yet sparing mercy of GOD, and improve this awakening passage of his holy word, to our eternal good! Who knows but (as it is the Lord's day) it may be GOD's time to visit and quicken us? Here are of all ages and descriptions—of all professions and worldly occupations present. Let us, then, begin and ask in order: What are we doing for eternity? What preparation are we making for that great harvest of the world, in which the reward of our hands shall be given us?

But with whom shall we begin? Let us state the most numerous class in that great body of opposition to GOD which this earth contains.

First, then, the worldling—by which I mean the person whose chief object and pursuit is, "the things that are seen"—the accommodations, enjoyments, and emoluments of time.

My brother in nature and in iniquity, what seed art thou sowing? what crop art thou cultivating? and what harvest dost thou expect to reap? Has the thought ever taken hold of thy heart, and the question been met, as from an immortal spirit, soon to appear before its awful Judge? or, "has the god of this world blinded thy mind, among those that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of CHRIST, who is the image of GOD, should shine unto thee?" Has the glory of the world, held up before thee by the prince of the power of the air, shut out from thy view "the glory of GOD, shining in the face of JESUS CHRIST," sent to redeem and deliver thee

from his power? O, if he has, let me now do mine office towards thee, by "turning thee from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to GOD," through the life and power of the word of GOD. "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Canst thou answer that? Can thy calculations of profit and loss take in this risk, and find a premium equal to it? No! "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

But, perhaps, prosperity has thee by the hand, and new barns and new warehouses are required for increasing goods, and thou art saying to thy soul, "be merry, and take thine ease, for thou hast much goods laid up for many years." But tell me, hast thou the years? Art thou insured against death? May it not be said to thee as to the fool in the parable, "this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall all these things be?" Canst thou take them with thee, and enjoy them in the invisible state? No! "we brought nothing into this world, and it is equally certain that we can carry nothing out." Will GOD accept them as a ransom for thy soul? No! "we are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of CHRIST." What, then, is this world—in the whole extent of its praise, and power, and splendor—worth to an immortal spirit on trial for eternity? Every tongue can answer, that it is nothing worth; every understanding can perceive the folly of such a dependence; and the worse than folly of making that our main object in this life which cannot profit us in "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of GOD." O, if those who are taken in this snare would but ask themselves, What is all that I am so busily engaged about doing for my soul? How does GOD look upon it? What will the event be in eternity?—and take the answer from his true and faithful word; surely there is a voice of wisdom, even in the reason of our own minds, which might counteract this temptation—might strengthen us to resist its seducing effect, and bring us to GOD on the warrant of his promise, for "grace to help in time of need!" But no! "the deaf adder is not more deaf to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely," than the worldling is to the united testimony of reason and religion. Even at this moment, when his conscience responds

to the truth, instead of opening his heart to receive it, he is striving how to put it away from him, and to find some subterfuge under which to take shelter. And readily will he find some flimsy pretence to make the worse appear the better reason. His master is on the watch to prompt the ready evasion, and even to say, "ye shall not surely die;" and the "strong delusion" which heaven threatens to send "upon those who will not believe," makes the devil's lie superior to the truth of GOD. But as "no lie is of the truth," so this will be found emphatically of the father of lies in that day, when "the fire shall try every man's work, whether it be good or evil." In this harvest of the world, then, what is the worldling to reap? He hath "laid up treasure upon earth;" but "the earth and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." He is "rich and increased in goods;" but he is "not rich towards GOD." No seed has been sowed to the glory of GOD; there is, therefore, to him, no harvest of reward in the kingdom of CHRIST and of GOD. Take then, thy gains in that day, worldling, and weigh them now in the balances of the sanctuary, and count their worth. Open thine ear to hear and thine heart to receive instruction, and be no longer deceived, for "GOD is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Secondly, the sensualist, by which I mean the slave of appetite—the brutal follower of the lusts of the flesh, whether openly profligate or more secretly offending.

What seed is the glutton and the drunkard sowing for eternity? And of what description must his heaven be, to meet the propensities of his nature? An eternity of brutified faculties, and inflamed passions—a heaven of riot and intemperance, of oaths and blasphemy. Why, the very thought is impious! And yet, for what else is the drunkard prepared? or in what else can he find satisfaction? We may suppose the mere worldly minded capable of being gratified in endless pursuit and accumulation; for there is something of mind, of intellectual exercise, in scheme and calculation. But to the glutton and the drunkard, intellect is of no use; his great purpose is, by repeated trial, to extinguish it and come nearer and nearer to the brute. Where, then, shall a place be found in GOD's kingdom of exalted and refined perception, purity and peace, for such characters? And where shall infinite

wisdom—to say nothing of justice—assign them their place in eternity, but with such as themselves? As, in this world, they are an offence to all decency, so, in the world to come, must they be excluded from those who shall stand before GOD. But when we come to add sin to the account of the drunkard, and count up the fearful wages reserved for it, then it is that the folly of this brutishness is apparent—the madness of this self-destruction conspicuous. The seed they have sown in time must produce after its kind in eternity; and what that is, we learn from the parable of the rich glutton in the gospel. "He fared sumptuously every day," and indulged his appetite; but "he died, and in hell he lift up his eyes in torments," and petitioned for a little water to cool his burning tongue, but it was denied him. "I am tormented in this flame," said he; but not one drop of those plenteous libations in which he had debauched himself, was now at his command. He increased thirst and nourished an artificial fever in his veins, by intemperance, when upon earth—this was the seed he sowed, and the thirst of everlasting burnings is the crop he reaps. Oh! what a price to be paid for the sordid indulgence of intoxication. But the only, and the certain price. For GOD hath said—and he is not mocked—"Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of GOD."

The same question must be asked of another class of sensualists—"those who walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness"—the adulterers and fornicators of the world. With what seed are they sowing the great field of eternity, and what crop shall they reap?

Look at the prowling profligate on the watch for his prey, as he skulks through darkness with the thief to the haunts of vice and wretchedness; and let darkness close upon what ought not once so much as to be named among Christians. Some sins can be exposed in their details, and, thereby, made the more odious; but this is too odious for exposure, and, therefore, the more hateful in the sight of GOD. Yet to no other is the world so lenient, or more criminally remiss in holding up to detestation those who are guilty of it. The wretched creature who steals your purse or your horse must forfeit all respect, and even his life; while he who steals from innocence its peculiar treasure, or invades the sanctity and peace of

wedded life, walks abroad unquestioned, and is received with smiles and favor. But no smile beams upon him from above. As only "the pure in heart shall see GOD," he whose heart and body are both defiled must be debarred the heavenly vision. He hath "sowed to the flesh," he must, therefore, "of the flesh reap corruption," both here and hereafter. He hath "lived after the flesh," therefore, he must die. For GOD hath said—and he is not mocked—"Fornicators and adulterers he will judge," and "neither shall inherit his kingdom."

Another class of sensualists, more numerous but less criminal than those I have described, is found in that great multitude, of all ages and descriptions, who, careless and thoughtless of hereafter, live only for present enjoyment—chiefly the young and the gay, who are placed above the necessity of bodily labor, and are furnished, without their own care, for even the superfluities of worldly accommodation.

To such, then, I put the question, What preparation are you making for eternity? What are you now sowing?

Yours is the spring time of life, the propitious season to sow in hope; yours is the season of happy disengagement from the cares and troubles of the world; favorable, therefore, to improvement of every kind. What, then, are you doing for your souls under these advantages? Are you sowing to the flesh or to the SPIRIT? Are your time and thoughts applied in a reasonable proportion to "acquaint yourselves with GOD" through his word? Does prayer form a part of your daily duty? Are your spare means employed in acts of charity and mercy? Are any self-denials encountered to enable you to do good? In short, are you "remembering your Creator in the days of your youth?" What can you answer? Are these things so in any such degree as to be relied upon before GOD? If so, then is your seed time for eternity happily begun, and your harvest shall be abundant; if you continue in the grace of GOD, "what you sow you shall reap."

But I fear for the answer you can truly make! Early piety is not the fruit of these evil times—times in which parents think to go to heaven themselves, and let their children come if they can; or, what is more frequent, think it of no importance either to themselves or their children how to get thither. Let me, then, put the question to you—from your real con-

dition. Is your time wasted in idle reading and frivolous work? Are your thoughts occupied with the vanities of the world, and your means applied to adorn you for its vicious dissipations? Is self-denial unthought of, and charity turned over to fathers and mothers? Is the Sabbath itself, and even the house of GOD, made a party to the indulgence and enjoyment of personal admiration, and GOD not in all your thoughts, as he ought to be in the thoughts of every accountable being under the gospel? Is this the seed you are sowing for eternity in this your spring time of life, in which you are so highly favored? "Oh! if the root be thus rottenness, shall not the blossom go up as dust?" And if the blossom be thus withered, where shall the fruit be found? What crop can you expect to reap either for time or for eternity? Are balls, and theatres, and frolics, and parties, seed plants to bear heavenly glory? Do they savour of GOD, or of the world? Do such things promote his fear and love in your hearts, or shut him out altogether from your thoughts as GOD? And how shall those appear before him who, in this life of trial and preparation, have laid another foundation, have nothing but the fashionable follies of a sin-struck world to recommend them to GOD? For, will GOD accept of them? This will determine their real worth. Ask, then, at his word, and receive the answer—"Be not deceived; GOD is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

To Christians, also, and to them above all others, is it necessary to put the question prompted by my text. Their profession, the honor of GOD, and the success of the gospel, as well as their own salvation, all bind upon them to "walk worthy of their high calling and glorious hope." And, unless these motives enter into the estimate they form of the gospel, they will in something come short of their duty. "No man liveth unto himself," especially no Christian. His life ought to be an active, persevering effort to promote the glory of GOD by promoting the welfare of all to whom he has access, particularly their spiritual welfare. This duty finds its first exercise in the family of the Christian. In addition to the ties of natural affection, he stands pledged for them in obtaining GOD's covenanted blessings. Under and subservient to the claims of natural affection, his duties branch out through

kindred to kind. As a member of the great human family, and himself a child of the "God and Father of the spirits of all flesh," a feeling of brotherhood includes even the most distant and unknown. But it is to those immediately in his reach, particularly the "household of faith," that his most active exertions are applied. The poor and the needy, the suffering and afflicted, find the true Christian a friend and a comforter; even the vicious and the profligate are not out of the reach of his good wishes and good offices, so far as they will suffer them. His example gives no countenance to conformity with the world in many of its vain and vicious pursuits; nor is the name of Christ, in this respect, blasphemed through those over whom he has either control or influence. And, in his more private deportment, God sees the deep and earnest devotion with which he serves him, prays unto him, and depends upon him: and he sees it to bless it—"For unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance."

Now, then, my Christian brethren of this congregation, is it with seed of this kind that you are sowing the field from which your harvest is to be reaped? To the extent of your power, does the love of Christ constrain you to do good unto all? Particularly, does it draw you forth with diligence to implant the fear of God in your children, and to train them up to his service? Are you sowing this field of duty thick with prayer for the divine blessing and direction? Is the world overcome in the temptation of its unsanctified vanities, and all conformity with its vicious pursuits put away from you? Are you frequent in your closet, and your heart warmed and your spirit strengthened by your devotions?—These are seeds of grace which surely ripen for glory in eternity: and that glory shall be yours if ye are "found faithful unto death." But "be not deceived." If you are sowing this field with other or with mixed seed, you lose your labor. "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good, or the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt." "I would thou wert cold or hot," says our Lord; "because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

What then remains, my hearers generally, but to exhort you to bring your worldly condition to the test of this equi-

table rule; and now, in this the seed time, every one of us for eternity, to seek the good seed of the kingdom to be sown in our hearts; and to cultivate it carefully in our lives, that "the fruit may be unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, unto him be glory in the Church, by CHRIST JESUS throughout all ages, world without end. AMEN."

SERMON XXXIV.

THE UNFRUITFUL FIG TREE.

LUKE xiii. 7.

Then said he to the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

The immediate connexion of the subjects in some of our LORD's discourses, as recorded by the Evangelists, is discernible only by careful and diligent consideration of the context. Of this the conversation, of which my text forms a part, may serve for an example.

The lesson we should all learn from it is obvious enough; but the connexion it has with the fate of those Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with that of their sacrifices, and of those on whom the tower of Siloam fell (respecting which events our LORD was discoursing with his disciples) is not so evident. The transition—from an exhortation to repentance grounded on the sudden and unlooked for destruction which overtook them, to the patience of GOD with delaying sinners—to be profitably applied by us, requires to be carefully considered and brought home to individual condition. But when thus considered, as it is more striking in its application, and calculated to make a more serious impression upon the conscience of the man; so is it nearer to that divine blessing, that supernatural energy of conviction, which makes the word of GOD life and power to our souls.

The use I would make of this observation at the entrance of my discourse is two fold.

First, to draw your attention in general to the very serious injury to your souls, which arises from mere cursory reading of the Scriptures; by which I mean such a reading of them as is unconnected with a deeply felt personal interest in what they contain. GOD's message to mankind is not only a revelation of his will to the world in general, but a special and

personal communication to each particular individual who is called into being under the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. From this alone can any individual derive satisfactory information of his actual condition, of his obligations to God, of the duties required in return, and of the sanctions by which they are enforced. To read it, then, as a mere fund of general information, as something important perhaps, but not special and personal, not as a direct communication from heaven to him who peruses it, is at the very outset to make the word of God of none effect. And to this cause, I am verily persuaded, it is owing, that numbers who admit the divine authority of the Scriptures, and have read their Bibles, have yet derived no profit from the word of life. Yet in assigning this as the cause why so many rational beings, with his message in their hands, are yet at a distance from God, and as careless and negligent of the interests of eternity as if the present life were the boundary of their existence, I would not be understood as meaning to exclude the many other causes which combine with superhuman power against the soul; but, according to my experience, to place the one I have mentioned in the front rank, as that by which all the others are increased in their power, and finally established in their dominion over us. Show me the man who has read his Bible only as a general communication to mankind, and I will show you the man who has laid it aside, and has no concern with religion. He may, indeed, be externally respectful to its forms occasionally, and be one who is amiable and estimable for the life that now is; but for the great and ulterior purpose of our present being, he is the fig tree on which there is nothing but leaves. But show me the man who has received and read his Bible as a communication from heaven to himself, and I will show you the man who continues in that word—who is a Christian by open profession and by practice, and is the fig tree which has fruit as well as leaves.

The next use I would make of the introductory observation on my text is, to warn you against a very common cause of disregard and inattention in reading the Scriptures, growing out of the peculiar manner in which the instruction they contain is expressed.

The moral of a parable, and the similitude and application

of a figure, require attention and reflection on the part of the hearer, to render them profitable. If, therefore, either from some fancied obscurity in the allusion, or from some assumed difficulty in the application, we neglect altogether or misapply the instruction thus given, we stand justly chargeable with all the consequences which must follow. That enmity and opposition to religion which is the mark of the natural man; his inaptitude to discern the things of the SPIRIT of GOD, of which he is advertised; with the powerful influence of present and sensible things, against which he is most earnestly warned; all conspire to urge him to an escape from the just and direct application of what can colorably be evaded in the warning and instruction of the Scriptures. And though this ruinous disposition of mind is met at the moment by the verdict of conscience—by the inward misgivings of the heart, that it is a false and forced conclusion we have come to, yet by what thousands of accountable and immortal beings, who are to be judged too by this very word, is this ruinous delusion followed! It is indeed true, my hearers, that the Scriptures themselves form a part of our trial; they are so framed, that we may draw from them the wisdom of salvation, or pervert them to destruction; and in this respect they stand on the same ground with all the other provisions of GOD's mercy and goodness to moral beings. This circumstance, therefore, so far from lessening the obligation we are under to use all diligence to acquaint ourselves with the mind of the SPIRIT, increases it by the full amount of all those awful consequences which await our failure or success in this primary duty.

That it was designedly and of wise purpose, and not merely in compliance with the figurative style of language common to the Eastern nations, that our LORD delivered his instructions to the people in parables and figures of known and visible things, we have his own declaration in two instances, and both of them so expressed as to require careful consideration in order to their being rightly understood.

The first is in these words: "Therefore speak I to them in parables, because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand." This reproach and reproof, so often objected by our LORD to the Scribes and Pharisees

in particular, and to the whole Jewish people in general, was not occasioned by any want of natural parts or faculties, but because of their want of a disposition and readiness to receive instruction. The one would have been a pitiable defect for which they could not be held answerable; but the other evidenced such a proud contempt of truth and right, such a perverse neglect of their highest interests, as rendered them and all others of a similar disposition worthy to be given over to their own ignorance and conceit.

The next declaration of our LORD is expressed in language still more remarkable: "All these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." From which we are to understand—not that it was the design of CHRIST to impede the salvation of those who heard him by the manner in which he framed his instructions—No! GOD forbid! for that would be to contradict the express and declared purpose for which he came into the world; but the meaning is, that he chose to deliver his doctrine in such a manner that those only who were really desirous to know the will of GOD, and disposed to do it when known—who were anxious to be informed, and willing to search for instruction in righteousness as for hid treasure—might receive and profit by his teaching, while the careless and negligent, the proud, conceited, and incorrigible, should reap the fruit of their wilful perverseness in remaining blind and deaf to all his instructions and exhortations. And this explanation of our Saviour's declarations, as on the one hand it clears them from all contradiction in the terms, and relieves us from deriving any impious doctrine therefrom; so on the other hand I trust it will convince all who hear me, that something more than mere reading the Scriptures is necessary to derive from them the saving knowledge with which they are stored, and enforce that consideration and earnest inquiry into their true meaning and application which it is the object of these introductory observations to excite. Their connexion with and bearing upon the subject will appear from the more particular consideration of the text, to which I now proceed.

"Then said he to the dresser of his vineyard, Behold: these

three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"

From the direct application of this parable to the Jewish Church and people, we learn, my brethren and hearers, its immediate and personal application to ourselves. God, in the inscrutable wisdom of his righteous government, and in the just exercise of his threatened wrath, having visited the sins of his ancient people, by casting them off from his particular favor and covenanted mercy, hath been graciously pleased to transfer these unspeakable benefits and high privileges to the Christian Church, and to call us, by the spread of the gospel in the world, to the knowledge of this grace and to the hope of eternal life through his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. This favored condition is largely set forth in the New Testament under a similar figure with that in my text. He hath transplanted us into his own vineyard; therefore, St. Paul addresses the Corinthian Church as "God's husbandry"—as "God's building." He hath grafted us, wild olive trees by nature, into the true olive tree, making us partakers, according to the same apostle's argument to the Roman Christians, of the root and fatness of a cultivated plant; having furnished us in his word and ordinances, and in the gift of his Holy Spirit, with all that is needful for growth and fruitfulness. Reasonably, therefore, does he expect the seasonable returns of his care and kindness, in those "fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God." This, my dear friends, is the true condition of every soul under the light of the gospel. From this condition, and the obligations it involves, nothing in the reach of human power and ingenuity—no subterfuge of unbelief—no sophistry of this world's wisdom, can possibly release you; and this is what the figure in my text is designed to press upon your attention.

I. Hence it will follow, that the first head of doctrine furnished by my text, is, the absolute necessity of spiritual improvement—of growth in grace. This is the fruit required by the owner of the vineyard, which is expected to be found on us as Christians, as plants of God's husbandry. From this nothing can excuse any of us, my hearers, as is most strikingly exhibited in the parable of the talents, in which we are taught that the equity of the great Governor of the universe proportions his demands according to what he has bestowed,

and in which the negligent, slothful, and unproductive servant stands condemned, not for the waste and abuse of his Lord's talent in actual sin and wickedness, but for failing to improve it. It needs not, then, my dear hearers, that we be actual sinners, outbreaking profligates, to incur the wrath of God in the miseries of outer darkness and rejection from his presence. Neglect of the gospel—indifference to the salvation it brings, will exclude from the reward it reveals. So that, however moral, however orderly, however upright, however respectful to religion our outward deportment may be, yet if our hearts are unchanged, if heavenly affections are not stirred up in our souls, if divine grace is not improved to holiness of life, we cannot see the Lord. Having no heavenly fruit of the Spirit of God to show, we are barren fig trees, fit for nothing but to be cut down and cast out of the vineyard.

II. Another, and very important head of doctrine contained in my text is this: That there is a limit to the patience and forbearance of God in his dealings with us as sinners. "These three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down." But though this is undeniably a clear inference from the text, and is confirmed by very many other passages of Scripture, and by the true nature of a probationary state, grounded on supernatural assistance; yet we are not to understand that the day of grace afforded under the gospel is limited to three years, according to our own or any other computation of time. It simply means a determinate space given to every man, wherein, by the use of the prescribed means, to make his calling and election sure. Within which space, repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, will avail for pardon and acceptance; but beyond which, neither repentance, nor faith, nor acceptance, are possible.

To a doctrine thus awakening in itself, and calculated to startle the thoughtless and secure, there is inseparably annexed, the awful uncertainty of what the extent of each particular person's limit may be. This, equally with the time of our death and the final judgment, God hath mercifully and wisely left among the secret things of his own counsel; while in making known the certainty of the event, he hath revealed all that can be useful to quicken our slothful spirits. O that poor delaying sinners, that the thoughtless votaries of pleasure, falsely so called, would but consider at what a dreadful

risk they continue to slight the affectionate warnings and admonitions of God's holy word, and the secret voice of their own consciences! For the time may come (it is threatened by him who cannot lie) when "they shall call, but God will refuse to answer"—when "distress and anguish shall seize upon them," but God, even the most merciful God, shall "laugh at their calamity and mock when their fear cometh." It is threatened in the words of my text, my delaying, spirit-grieving hearers—"Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" which leads me to the

III. Third and last head of doctrine I shall notice from the text.

"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after that the judgment." Religion without accountability is a baseless fabric; and accountability without corresponding sanctions, is the prostration of God's moral government of the world. Hence, that he should assert the dignity of his supreme dominion, and vindicate the insulted majesty and purity of his holy law upon those who rebel and transgress against him, is not only the clear and unequivocal discovery of revelation, but the insuppressible sentiment of every human heart. Without this universally felt and acknowledged truth, hope is a delusion, and fear a phantom of the imagination; right and wrong, virtue and vice, are mere arbitrary denominations, and the religion of Christ a deceitful fable. But, from natural feeling, from inward consciousness, from the light of reason, from the testimony of superstition, from the whole analogy of nature, we are aware that we are accountable beings, and that on the account we shall be able to give in, will depend our future and eternal weal or woe. This deep and universal impression cannot be wholly obliterated, my brethren. We may, and too many of us, alas! do what we can to smother our consciences under the vanities of time, and say to the monitor within us, as Felix did to St. Paul, "Go thy way for this time." But its power is shown in the moment of surprise and danger, when death demands his victim; and the fearful anticipations and awful forebodings of the wicked, equally with the hope and composure of the righteous, unite in fastening upon the soul the faithful conviction, that what is revealed will surely be executed.

And yet, so deep is the depravity of our fallen nature, so absolute the corruption of our faculties, and so powerful the tendency to unbelief, that for the transient pleasures of sin—knowing it to be sin, for the poor perishing things of this world—knowing how uncertain, empty, and unsatisfying they are—we can and we do, thousands of us, dare the sanctions of eternity, and risk the wrath of GOD. Multitudes can and do make light of the improvement of their spiritual advantages, required by the gospel on pain of everlasting misery, and careless whether they are fruitful or barren in the things of GOD and religion, waste their day of grace—the unknown limit of heaven's mercy and forbearance—in "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of GOD." O that GOD would be pleased to touch the hearts of those who are thus running the round of folly and destruction, and enable me so to apply the subject as to convince both saint and sinner of the awful danger in which neglect of the advantages conferred by the gospel places them! For both saint and sinner are deeply interested in the warning of my text, according to their several conditions.

To the sinner, (and by sinner I mean the person whose course of life is in opposition to the gospel, either by open wickedness or actual neglect of religion and its ordinances,) my text speaks of the love of GOD, of the mercies of redemption, of the blood of CHRIST, of the means of grace, all scorned, slighted, trodden under foot, and despised; and it calls upon him to consider, before it be too late, what answer he can make to GOD for thus setting at nought both his invitations and his commands. Let me ask you, then, and with all the affectionate earnestness of a friend who sees and feels for your danger—are the works of the flesh, in sensuality and uncleanness, in revellings and drunkenness, in Sabbath-breaking and profaneness, the fruit which GOD expects from a people whom he hath favored with the gospel? Is love of the world, in its vain and sinful pursuits, that love of the Father which the author of all your mercies, the giver of every good and perfect gift to his creatures, deserves and requires at your hands? Is the idolatry of wealth-worship, the love of money, that "hungering and thirsting after righteousness," that "seeking first the kingdom of GOD," which is enjoined

upon all who would secure a place at his right hand? Is entire disconnexion with religion, under any of the multiplied forms in which it is accessible to every shade of caprice, that confession of the LORD JESUS CHRIST before men, which we are commanded to make, on pain of being denied by him in the great day of eternity? Alas! my dear hearers, such is not "the spot of GOD's children!" Such is not the "fruit" which he requires and will accept as a return for the inestimable blessings of the gospel! No! the end of these things is death, even the death of the soul. For the time cometh —and GOD only knoweth how near it may be to any of you— when the LORD of the vineyard, wearied by continual disappointment, with coming year after year, seeking fruit and finding none, shall pronounce the irreversible sentence—"Let no fruit grow on thee for ever;"—when the HOLY SPIRIT, quenched and extinguished by the love of sin, shall take his final flight, and leave the impenitent rejecter of CHRIST, like a blasted and sapless tree, a mere cumberer of the ground, fit for nothing but to be cut down and cast into the fire. "Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead," ere thy day of grace close upon hope and mercy, now held out to thee through the cross of CHRIST; awake to faith, to repentance, to calling upon GOD with strong crying and tears, and "CHRIST shall give thee light." Let not to-morrow steal away the convictions of thy heart; for it may not come to thee, or it may come a blank in thy salvation.

Thus does this awakening portion of GOD's most holy word apply itself to the consciences of those who withhold themselves from the means of grace, and turn a deaf ear to the invitations of the gospel. But to professors of religion—to the household and family of CHRIST, who are, in the proper sense, the vineyard of the LORD—it applies in a different respect. To such it speaks of improvement, of increase, of advancement in the divine life, of fruitfulness in the knowledge of the LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, of going on unto perfection. As heirs of an incorruptible inheritance, it speaks to them of preparation for it in victory over sin, and the attainment of holiness. It, therefore, speaks to them of watchfulness and prayer; of self-denial and non-conformity with the world; of diligence and faithfulness in all their duties, "look-

ing unto Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith." Such was the fruit which he bore towards God in the days of his flesh; and such is the fruit which he requires of all his faithful members. To this gracious end, he hath furnished them with the help and guidance of his Holy Spirit; the counsel of his true and faithful word; the means of grace in the ordinances of his house, and the bright example of his holy life. These he hath left for their attainment of eternal life in that everlasting kingdom, whither he is gone before to prepare a place for them. But he hath left them, my brethren, on conditions, which give no room for slothfulness, or negligence; which never permit the Christian to say, It is enough, I have attained—and the condition which includes all the rest, is growth in grace. "Unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." This is the condition set forth in the words of my text, and applied more especially to his Church.

And is it so, then, my brethren, that the members of Christ may forfeit their privileges and the glorious hope under which they are enrolled in the Lamb's book of life? Yes; our Lord Jesus Christ himself being witness against all inventions of men, who would be wise above what is written—"Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground." Let the unfruitful Christian then tremble at his danger, lest the command be already gone forth. Let the diligent and faithful be stirred up to greater watchfulness against the encroaching spirit of the world; and let all who have ears to hear, and souls to be saved, learn the unchangeable condition on which they stand for the mercy or the wrath of God in eternity—improvement of their day of gospel grace, to the attainment of that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Oh! it is a heart-sinking thought, to look round on the thousands of immortal beings for whom this grace is so richly provided, and to whom time and opportunity are given for the improvement of this talent, and then contemplate the apathy and indifference wherewith religion is regarded by nations and individuals, by high and low, by rich and poor,

by bond and free! It is alarming to mark the unconcern with which the flying years of an uncertain existence are permitted to pass away, one after another, without thought, without impression, without any serious calculation of what has been done, of what is yet to do, for eternity. Yet by every vanishing year—and we know it well, my dear hearers—eternity, that eternity in which there are no successive years to count upon, in which there is no to-morrow for the thoughtless to escape to, is by so much the nearer to us all.

Let the closing year, then—and surely the exhortation is appropriate to my text—let the closing year make its application of these truths to your consciences, and form a point for all to pause upon, and count up how often in this way the lord of the vineyard hath come seeking fruit on this fig tree—to reflect what fruit our past lives have presented to God, and thence be made wiser for the years that are to come. Let the dark but wise uncertainty which is spread out over the duration of time and of grace to all, rebuke delay, and rouse to diligence; and let the past forbearance of God through the intercession of the merciful dresser of the vineyard, knock at the door of every heart, and obtain an entrance for that truth which gives hope, for that repentance which leads to God, for that faith which unites to Christ, which overcomes the world, and lays hold on eternal life.

Having thus appealed to you, my brethren and hearers, from God, in behalf of your immortal souls, permit me for a moment to descend to myself, and make my appeal to this congregation* as their pastor. "Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree." True, my brethren, three years of my very imperfect, often interrupted, but, as I hope, not altogether unfaithful services, have come to a close. It is a period of sufficient extent to be marked with effect, and it is our joint duty to pass it under a strict review. As Christians, you must know whether upon the whole you have profited by my labors, whether you are increasing in knowledge, growing in grace, strengthened in faith, and more devoted to God. These are the fruits which he requires from his people, and which he commands them to manifest in the

* Preached at Raleigh, N. C., Dec. 31, 1826.

daily practice of their lives. This has been my object in my public and private labors; but I fear, greatly fear, that they have not been rightly directed or properly received. For, undeniably, there is among the members of our communion, more conformity with the world in things not directly sinful, than is seemly or becoming in those who have renounced the world, and say that they look for a better country. Let this, then, my brethren, be taken into that retrospect which the time and the subject unite to press upon our hearts.

The great security of the Christian is engagement—such a heartfelt sense of the importance of religion, and of the comfort of Christian hope, as places it first in estimation and desire. From this, fruitfulness will spring as from its proper soil. But without this lively power, a dead though perhaps decent profession of religion is the most that can be looked for; equally unproductive towards God, unprofitable towards men, and uncomfortable to the poor barren fig tree which rests satisfied with leaves, and is careless of that "fruit unto holiness whose end is eternal life."

Three years I have come, my brethren, seeking fruit for God, and I say not that I have found none. No! God forbid! But I would that it were in larger quantity, and more ripened. Yet when due allowances are made for the many interruptions you have to submit to from my frequent and necessary absences, I feel that there is great cause of thankfulness to God, and encouragement to persevere. Let past mercies, then, stir us all up to future exertion, to put forth the ability he giveth for the increase of his kingdom, and to "abound yet more and more in every good word and work;" for, "herein," says our blessed Lord, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Let us go forth, my brethren, to the duties and trials of another year, "strong in the Lord and the power of his might." And may that blessing "which turneth the wilderness into a fruitful field," and "maketh streams to break forth in the desert," go with you, and give you victory, and return seven fold into your bosom those fruits of affection, regard, and kindness, which your pastor has received from his flock.

SERMON XXXV.

THE CAUSE OF UNFRUITFULNESS IN RELIGION.

HEBREWS iv. 2.

But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

It is very profitable, my brethren, and calculated to make a good impression upon the heart, to consider carefully what great pains Almighty GOD hath taken to make the fruits of his compassion for a race of sin-ruined creatures, effectual for their recovery and restoration to his favor. To this end, he has not only acquainted us with his will in his revealed word, and given us commandments for the regulation of our lives; but he has added thereto the most powerful motives which rational natures can contemplate, in the happiness or misery of eternity. These he hath set forth, as the unavoidable consequences of the part we shall perform in the present life, and urges us, in the most earnest and affectionate manner, to believe and obey, that we may obtain eternal life.

He has not only given us a faithful delineation of our own dispositions and affections, as corrupted and perverted by sin, together with the wisest counsels and most effectual means to guard against and counteract their destructive influence; but he has added example also, in the history of men of like passions with ourselves, in every variety of condition, and under the progressive displays of that grace which he has been pleased to manifest, at sundry times and in divers manners, for the salvation of sinners. In an especial manner, he hath set forth the history and example of his chosen people, the children of Israel, as the standing admonition to Christians, in the improvement of their most gracious dispensation; furnishing to every condition in life, and in every variety of trial, that lesson of wisdom which precept and example united, present to rational beings, under failure or success, favor or rejection, unalterably consequent on faith-

fulness or disobedience to the divine commands; and that this was the wise and gracious purpose of the recorded history of the Jewish people, we have the authority of an inspired apostle for believing. "All these things," says St. Paul, "happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

Of this most profitable use of the Scriptures of our faith, in the Christian warfare, many most striking instances might be given; but none, perhaps, more in point or more applicable to the present times, than that which is referred to in the words of my text; which the same inspired apostle applies as a warning to the Hebrew Christians; and which we, my brethren and hearers, may, and, if we are wise, will, apply to correct that careless, unconcerned temper—that bold and increasing infidel spirit, under whose baleful operation the mercies of the gospel are all neutralized, and the power of religion is fast fading away from the profession of Christianity.

"But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

In discoursing on these words, I will first notice the circumstance to which the apostle alludes, and then apply them to general edification.

The promise of God to Abraham was, that he would give to his descendants the country where he then sojourned, to the utmost extent of its boundary, as a rest and inheritance to them and to their children for ever. To this promise, however, was annexed the condition of fidelity and obedience on their part. At the deliverance of the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, this promise was renewed, and formed the prominent object of their expectations. To prove their faithfulness, however, and at the same time to manifest himself more fully, and to make his laws and his worship known to them, as his peculiar people, God led them by the hand of Moses through the Red Sea and the wilderness of Arabia, sustaining them miraculously with bread from heaven and with water from the rock, which followed them in all their wanderings through a barren and burning desert.

With the immediate protection and providence of Almighty God thus certified to their senses, the heart of this

people nevertheless failed them, when they understood, that many and powerful nations were in possession of the promised land, with whom they had to contend for this inheritance; they, therefore, refused to go up and possess the land; murmuring against Moses, and in the face of all the wonders hitherto wrought for their deliverance and support, dishonoring GOD by unbelief, in distrusting his power to subdue their enemies and make good his promises. Wherefore the LORD sware in his wrath, that none of that rebellious generation, with the exception of two individuals, should enter into the promised rest, or even see the land; but that they should wander in the wilderness, until death had consumed the rebels, in the usual manner in which human life passes on to its termination.

This is the particular circumstance in the history of the Jewish people to which the apostle alludes, and on which he grounds his exhortation to Christians, to a hearty reception and steadfast belief of the promises of GOD in the gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST; and by which he shows, beyond all reasonable objection, that those promises are not absolute and unconditional, but adapted to the condition of moral beings, who are to be judged, and rewarded or punished, according to their works in the present state of trial and preparation for eternity. "Let us therefore fear," says this apostle, writing to Christians—"Let *us* therefore fear, lest a promise being left *us* of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it; for unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them. But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

A faithful application of this subject to ourselves, then, my brethren and hearers, will instruct us as to the cause, and warn us of the consequences, of permitting the mercies of our condition, and the counsel of GOD for our salvation, to remain unheeded and unimproved. Let us, therefore, consider with attention, the cause here assigned for the indifference, carelessness, and disregard of those unspeakable benefits, to the knowledge and attainment of which, GOD hath called us by the gospel.

That the promises and threatenings of Almighty GOD should be disregarded by rational beings, on any other ground than

that of unbelief, is next to impossible to imagine. When, therefore, the Scriptures uniformly denounce this as the cause of all sin and wickedness among men, they appeal to a principle, the truth and correctness of which is confirmed by individual experience; for who is influenced by information to which he gives no credit? or who is affected by either promises or threatenings, of which he doubts or disbelieves the performance? Now, while it is certain that there are thousands and tens of thousands, under the light of the gospel, and who are not ignorant of the facts and doctrines of revelation, who are yet wholly unaffected by any religious impression; it is equally certain that there are very few, perhaps not one, of such persons, who could honestly claim the benefit of entire unbelief, were any advantage possible from such an unhappy state of mind. And this is certified to us by the anxiety and alarm which such persons manifest at the approach, or under the serious apprehension of death. Not that such apprehensions then come upon them for the first time.—No! repeatedly, continually through life, have they knocked at the door of their hearts, and urged the reasonableness, the prudence, the safety, of listening to the still small voice of God, speaking through their consciences, but have been told to wait for a more convenient season. Hence it appears, that this master sin of accountable beings is not only a voluntary act, but, in a very high degree, a forcible rejection of such testimony as, in the agreement of the witnesses, makes truth itself more certain. When the voice of conscience is confirmed by the revealed word of God—and it is immaterial which speaks first—there is no refuge for the neglecters of such irrefragable testimony, but wilful unbelief.

Now I take upon me to say—and I appeal to your own hearts, my hearers, for its confirmation—that this is the actual condition of by far the greater number, who, here and elsewhere, give an occasional Sunday forenoon to "hearing preaching," as it is called. Repeatedly has the truth preached received this double confirmation. Again and again, has the heart almost been persuaded to yield. Yea, in many instances, conviction has stung the soul for a season with all its terrors. But unbelief, in some of its multiplied deceits of pride, procrastination, and worldly interest, has driven off

the SPIRIT of GOD, and shut the door against the Physician of souls. If this be not so, why are so many among us regardless of GOD and careless of eternity? Whence is it, that what their reason assents to, and their heart confirms by its involuntary testimony to the truth, shall, in one little hour, be put to flight, and exhibit the awful spectacle of redeemed sinners—unconverted to GOD, and knowing themselves to be such—yet putting away from them the means of grace, rejecting the counsel of GOD against their own soul, and sporting in all the gaiety of unconcern, over that gulf of bottomless perdition, from which they are separated only by the brittle, uncertain, and continually breaking shell of human life. The word preached does not profit them. Why? Because of unbelief. Because it is not mixed or accompanied with faith in them that hear it. Full credit is not given to it, as the word and truth of GOD; nor is any other cause assigned, by the wisdom of GOD, of the disregard of religion by men. The corruption of our nature, indeed, by the entertainment of sin, is the root. But this very corruption is the primary fact which revelation discovers to us—the foundation of all that follows; and is itself the hardest, perhaps the last of all, to be fully believed. Against this truth, this master-key to the grace of the gospel, unbelief musters all its forces. Whatever self-love or self-righteousness can suggest, to edge in something of unbroken, unperverted good in our nature—something independent of divine grace, unpurchased by the blood of a divine Saviour, and bestowed upon us for his sake only—is maintained with all the pertinacity which pride can impart, for the defence of this citadel of its power; and while this is maintained, CHRIST will profit us nothing. As he is the only Saviour, so is he an entire Saviour. His priceless worth comes not into union with merit in man. "To you that believe, he is precious," says St. Peter; and CHRIST is precious to the believer, exactly in proportion as this foundation-fact of revealed truth is embraced, and realized, and acted upon. It is the total, not the partial destitution into which sin hath sunken our nature, which requires the might of Omnipotence to restore, through GOD the Son, bleeding upon the cross, and GOD the HOLY GHOST, imparting spiritual life to the soul. "By grace are ye saved, through faith."

Therefore, the word preached cannot profit you, so long as unbelief maintains its power, and exalts itself against GOD and the word of his grace, either in whole or in part. While GOD's holy word preached to you is allowed to pass unheeded from your memories, unhonored by your practice of the duties it enjoins; while neither his promises nor his threatenings move you to seek the salvation he offers through the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and through him alone; the hope and the comfort of the gospel is unattainable—the rest that remaineth to the people of GOD cannot be found. As GOD sware in his wrath, that the rebellious Israelites shall not enter into the typical rest of the promised land; so hath he also sworn, that the fearful and unbelieving, under the gospel, shall have their part, not in rest, but in the lake of fire. "We which have believed," says St. Paul, (continuing his argument from this example)—"we which have believed, do enter into rest." But to unbelief, there is no rest, no security, even no hope. Its brightest expectation is shrouded in darkness; its highest assurance, if we may use the word, rests upon conjecture; its most commanding motives are not drawn from the love of GOD in CHRIST JESUS—they are not derived from the life and immortality brought to light by the gospel. To the unbeliever, there is no "Saviour who is CHRIST the LORD;" no HOLY GHOST, "the Comforter," Enlightener, and Sanctifier; no sacraments, no means of grace in this life; no good hope after death; no reunion of soul and body, and of dear friends and brethren, in a blissful eternity. There may, indeed, be a GOD; for unbelievers are not Atheists. But he is "a GOD afar off," he is "a GOD that hideth himself;" who speaketh not to his creatures; who furnishes no provision for the want and misery of a sinner, such as man. There is no hand to wipe the tear from the eye of the unbeliever—to present the cup of consolation to his wounded spirit; there is no word to speak of comfort, and say to the penitent, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." Darkness and uncertainty are all that the unbeliever is possessed of, on the deeply interesting subjects of GOD and eternity; of their relation to the one, and of their condition in the other. O that you may this day perceive, how cold and comfortless, how hopeless and dangerous it is, to continue careless and uncon-

cerned, unmoved and unaffected, by the glorious display of divine love, wisdom, and power, manifested in the redemption of the world by our LORD JESUS CHRIST! and, bursting the bonds of unbelief, struggle into the "glorious liberty of the children of GOD!" Alas! how many gay, and thoughtless, and apparently happy young creatures; how many intelligent, active, and industrious persons; how many gray and reverend heads, have yet to awake to their true condition, as unbelievers—living without GOD in the world, and to learn, that we are saved only by faith—that there is "none other name under heaven given amongst men, whereby we must be saved, only the name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth," openly confessed before men, and faithfully followed in the example of his life, and in the obedience of his holy commandments. "But the word preached doth not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it."

If unbelief be thus voluntary and criminal, the inquiry naturally presents itself—Is faith equally voluntary, and within our own power? To answer this question aright, it will be necessary to settle, in the first place, what is to be understood by the word.

Faith, in its full Scriptural meaning, is that assent to divine testimony which renews the heart to GOD, and rules the life to his service. And, in this sense, such is the condition of fallen creatures, "that they cannot turn and prepare themselves, by their own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon GOD," as it is expressed in our tenth article. And in this sense, and this only, is it, that faith, as a fruit of the SPIRIT, is the gift of GOD.

In another sense of the word, however, and that the one in which it is used in my text, faith is such an assent to divine testimony as convinces the understanding, though the affections and the conduct may not be suitably influenced thereby; and, in this sense of the word, all rational beings, through the undertaking of JESUS CHRIST, are rendered capable of this duty; and so far faith is a voluntary act, and in our own power. Hence it is that the want of faith is never considered and spoken of in the word of GOD as a pitiable defect, which it must be were it involuntary; but as a criminal rejection of truth, confirmed by the highest evidence. Now, while it is

very true that the strongest and most consistent testimony may be disbelieved, yet it is equally true that the person rejecting sufficient evidence is not thereby excused, but, on the contrary, condemned as unreasonable, obstinate, or prejudiced. And as we act on this principle in the common affairs of life, we have but to transfer it to the divine testimony in favor of revealed religion, in order to understand how, and to what extent, the duty required of us is in our own power, as I will endeavor to show you.

As "faith is the evidence of things not seen," it must, necessarily, depend upon testimony of some kind, whether its object be human or divine things. If the question, then, be—Hath God, indeed, revealed his will to mankind? it must be met as a question of fact, to be considered and determined by its proper evidence. Now, this evidence, we, as rational beings, are able to investigate; to try it by such rules as give sufficient certainty to other facts, of which we have no sensible demonstration, and to determine accordingly: and, as moral beings, we are bound, both by duty and interest, to make this examination, with the simplicity and sincerity of mind which its supreme importance demands, and, if sufficiently attested, to receive and obey it without delay or reserve. No sane mind, I presume, will venture to deny the duty of submission and obedience, on the part of all his creatures, to the known and acknowledged will of God. But, if this is undeniably their duty, it must be in their power; for God cannot require impossibilities, or reveal contradictions.

To the objection, then, which is sometimes resorted to—that, in the revelation given us of the will of God, we are commanded to do that, which at the same time we are told that we cannot do—we answer, that it is founded altogether on a superficial and erroneous view of the subject, on perverted doctrine, or is resorted to as a quietus to wilful unbelief. It is true that the discoveries which revelation makes to us of our natural aversion to God and goodness, of our inability to do any thing in itself worthy of his acceptance, are clear and unequivocal. But it is equally true that those discoveries are made, not to repress our exertions, but to inform and set us right as to our true condition, and to rouse and stimulate us to apply and seek for that rich provision of

divine wisdom and grace which is therein also revealed and set forth as our portion in CHRIST JESUS, and as the means through which we can render acceptable service to the GOD of our salvation. The religion of fallen sinners, to be worthy of GOD, must be founded on grace, or assistance proceeding from him. The religion of moral beings, to be accepted of GOD, must proceed from the voluntary choice and improvement of the means given to that end. And in the union of these two principles consists the harmony of the Christian dispensation and the accountability of man.

This may, perhaps, be rendered plainer to you by an example. Saving faith, being the gift of GOD, is beyond the natural ability of fallen creatures; yet it is required of them, in order to salvation. But the belief of GOD's revealed word sufficiently attested, and obedience to his commands, are within their natural ability; and, by the performance of what is confessedly within their power, that which is not, is attainable. In other words—GOD having been pleased to annex his grace, or the assistance of his HOLY SPIRIT, to the use of means, it is thus to be sought by us, and in this way to be obtained. Nor can we adopt a different view of the subject, unless under the influence of enthusiasm, or of a fatalism destructive of religion. Besides, as all religious attainment is progressive, saving faith, sanctification, and all other the mature fruits of the SPIRIT of GOD, are to be looked for, not at the commencement, but during the progress and at the close of our Christian course. According to the words of our Saviour—"He that hath, to him shall be given:" for "so is the kingdom of GOD, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

If this view of the obligation to believe, and of our capacity for the attainment of faith, and of all other Christian graces dependent on it, is supported not only by the general tenor of Scripture, but by particular texts; and is, moreover, the only foundation of accountability in moral creatures; a fearful responsibility rests upon those who make no corresponding effort to consider and improve their advantages under the

light of the gospel. But the slightest acquaintance with revelation shows, that such is the case. God's message to mankind is addressed to them as capable of understanding, believing, and obeying his word; and his promises are all suspended on the condition that they do this. If this be not so, what possible meaning can we attach to such texts as the following? "Repent and believe the gospel." "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "He that believeth not is condemned already." "Come unto me, all the ends of the earth, and be saved." Are these, and thousands like them, addressed to beings who cannot understand and apply them? who have no control over their own corrupt wills, no power to withstand the admitted and forewarned opposition of their fallen nature, no reason to consider and estimate the consequences? God forbid! Else whereto serveth the Bible? and why am I here to preach and you to hear? and where is the warning to Christians from the example referred to in my text? Was the promise of Almighty God, to give to that generation of the Jews the land of Canaan as an inheritance —confirmed as it was by the miracles in Egypt, by the passage of the Red Sea, by the manna and the water of the wilderness—sufficient for faith to rest upon for what was yet to fulfil in its completion? Our reason says, Yes, my hearers, and wonders at and condemns the hardness and stupidity of that people. And shall we escape a similar rejection from the heavenly rest, who, with clearer light, and more wonderful displays of the power and faithfulness of Almighty God, continue in unbelief, and, through carelessness and love of the world, neglect this great salvation? "Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things."

But further yet: "Faith," says the apostle, "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

God having revealed his will, his ministers have wherewithal to preach. But is mere hearing all that is required of the people? Is faith to come without an effort on the part of the hearer, to be assured that it is the word of God that is

preached, and to obey it when heard? No! and no one but a fanatic ever thought so. For the gospel is commanded to be preached among all nations for the obedience of faith; and as reason is competent to estimate the proofs that the gospel is "the word which GOD, in these last days, hath spoken unto us by his Son," so is it equally competent to perceive the supreme obligation to receive and obey it as such—to put forth every power and faculty of a redeemed nature in this superlative duty; and, on the faith of GOD's command, to expect, in the use of means, the fruit of GOD's promises. He calls us to his heavenly rest, and hath sent his only begotten Son to guide us to the promised land, as he called his ancient people from Egyptian bondage, and sent Moses to lead them to Canaan. He promises to be our support and defence during our pilgrimage, and to make us victorious over all our enemies, in like manner as he promised to the children of Israel. But as they feared the Anakims who possessed the land, as they dreaded the toils of the war and the dangers of the battle, lusting after the flesh pots of Egypt, and dishonored GOD by their unbelief; so do we too, too many of us, fear the contest with our corruptions, and dread the privations of self-denial, and, "loving the pleasures of sin for a season" more than the rewards of eternity, "fall after the same example of unbelief," and thereby forfeit that rest which CHRIST hath purchased—which GOD hath promised, and furnished us to attain. Light is, indeed, come into the world, even the light of life; but men love darkness rather than light. The glad tidings of a reconciled GOD, and an Almighty Saviour—of grace abounding even to the chief of sinners, and of eternal life assured to all who believe and obey the gospel —are preached continually, but they do not profit them that hear. The cause of this ruinous disregard of GOD's mercies to their souls is faithfully laid before them, both by precept and example, and they hear the words but they do them not.

Need we, then, to be surprised, my brethren, at the small effect which is produced among us, by the preaching of the word? I think not. The cause is fully sufficient to account for the effect. Nor need we wonder at the disregard of religion, and the consequent wickedness, which abounds; but we may well wonder, that where so much is known and felt to

be at stake, rational beings, on trial for eternity, should thus act—and, while we wonder, mourn also, and lament, that those for whom God hath done so much, should be so averse to do any thing for their own souls.

Would you profit, then, my hearers, by the preaching of the word? Bear in mind, that you must be "doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls." The divine blessing is suspended on your own endeavors—"Unto him that hath, shall be given; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath." Remember that, "without faith, it is impossible to please God." All expectations, therefore, built upon the morality of our lives; all sweeping conclusions, that God is other than he is revealed to us in Christ, and that he will save us apart from the conditions of the gospel, are among the deepest deceits of the devil, and the immediate fruit of unbelief. "Thou believest that there is one God, thou doest well; the devils, also, believe and tremble." Where, then, is thy advantage, unbeliever? What knowest thou of this awful and tremendous Being, abstracted from his own revelation of himself? What doth he require of thee? How will he deal with thee? What is provided for thee after death?—Unbeliever, canst thou tell? No! neither canst thou hope. Hope—a good hope through grace—springs from the revealed word—from a God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, and pouring out his Holy Spirit to recover it to holiness and eternal life. Hope springs from endeavor, from exertion to obtain what we hope for: and faith must go before as the first foundation of all. "To faith all things are possible;" but to unbelief there is nothing possible, because there is no motive—nothing to excite the soul, either to hope or fear; neither is there any thing promised, but the blackness of darkness for ever.

Have we, then, my brethren and hearers, ample foundation for faith to rest securely upon? sufficient motives for exertion? efficient means for attainment? Whence, then, this indifference, this apathy, when eternity is at stake? Shall a preached gospel—the glad tidings of heaven's love and of man's redemption—become the savor of death to your souls, through your own neglect? Shall the sacrifice of the cross for your salvation prove the ground of a deeper condemna-

tion, and identify you with those who crucified the LORD of glory? O, bethink you, while GOD is waiting to be gracious; while CHRIST continues to intercede for sinners; while the HOLY SPIRIT is present to lead you into all truth; and while a preached gospel offers its treasures of wisdom and knowledge, of grace and truth, of comfort and encouragement, of pardon and peace, let faith seize upon the rich inheritance, that "the fruit may be unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Be no longer ashamed of the gospel, but let your confession of CHRIST be openly made, and your acknowledgment of him, as your only hope of mercy and acceptance with GOD, be manifested by obeying his commands, and following the bright example he hath set you in his life.

And you, my brethren, who have this day solemnly renewed your baptismal engagements, take heed to yourselves, that what you profess to believe, be exhibited in its fruits; "that by so doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," and "your light so shine before" them, that they may be induced to choose that good part, which shall not be taken from them. Be not faithless, but, like the great father of the faithful, even against hope believing in hope, set to your seal that GOD is true. Let not a doubting mind weaken and defeat the effect of GOD's precious promises, and deaden your endeavors faithfully to fulfil the obligations this day undertaken. Bear in mind our blessed LORD's rebuke to doubting, sinking Peter—"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Let "your profiting appear to all men," on the sure ground, that the help promised to enable you to work out your salvation, is and will be given you from above; and that as members of CHRIST, you shall receive of that "fulness of grace, which it hath pleased the Father should dwell in him," for his body the church. Only believe, for "all things are possible to him that believeth." "The promises of GOD being in CHRIST, yea, and in CHRIST, amen, to every one," who, with hearty repentance and true faith, embraces and obeys the gospel.

SERMON XXXVI.

GRIEVING THE SPIRIT.

EPHESIANS iv. 30.

And grieve not the HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

A provision of divine grace, or spiritual assistance, freely bestowed by Almighty GOD, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST, in order to enable fallen creatures to fulfil the conditions on which the rewards of eternity are suspended, is a leading and fundamental doctrine of the Christian revelation. And as this divine help, in its commencement and progress to holiness, is the special office of GOD the HOLY GHOST; the regeneration, conversion, sanctification, and resurrection of believers, are constantly referred in the Scriptures to his operations. Of these operations, the history of Christianity, as presented for our learning in the writings of the apostles, is the authentic record. From this, we must not only derive the belief of the doctrine, but learn, also, in what manner we must apply ourselves, to obtain this assistance, and how we are to ascertain its presence and effects. And for both these essential purposes, we are amply furnished, my brethren, in those Scriptures, "which are given by inspiration of GOD, and are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in CHRIST JESUS;" for we there read, that GOD hath promised his HOLY SPIRIT to all that ask it in fervent prayer, and that "the fruit of the SPIRIT is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth."

On a subject, however, of such importance to our present comfort and eternal welfare, as that divine help, without which we can do nothing towards the improvement and perfection of our moral nature, GOD hath been graciously pleased, not only to give us the most satisfactory information of the fact, but to add thereto, outward and sensible assurances to our faith in his promises, by the sacraments of the gospel.

In our original dedication to God, accordingly, in the sacrament of baptism, this indispensable, supernatural assistance is certified to our senses by "an outward and visible sign, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof." Hence, the sacramental character of the ordinance, in representing to our senses the mystery of our ingrafting into Christ, and being made partakers of his Spirit; thus giving to faith that additional assurance which is furnished by the personal application of a general promise, and the personal undertaking of a common obligation. Much, my brethren, depends upon the view we take of the gospel, as a message from God to mankind in general; and of the ordinances of the gospel, as connected with the promises therein contained. For, however true, however attractive in its promises, and full of comfort and hope in its discoveries, it is but a speculation of the intellect, until personally appropriated, through its outward and visible ordinances. These are the title deeds, as it were, by which this rich provision of the love of God towards the world at large, is specially conveyed and made over to each individual who is called to the knowledge of this grace, and accepts the invitation of the gospel. By the undertaking of the Son of God for this sin-ruined world, called in Scripture the "grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," God is enabled to offer terms of reconciliation and forgiveness to sinners, promises of favor and reward to believers, and to supply the disabilities consequent on original sin with renewed powers of spiritual capacity; and as these are derived from the operations of the Holy Ghost, therefore it is, that the gift of the Spirit of God, as the root and spring of all spiritual attainment, is bestowed and certified in that ordinance in which we solemnly undertake the obligations of the gospel. Thus is the religion we profess a reasonable service. Almighty God, of his mercy and goodness, supplies our lost ability by the renewal of spiritual strength, and, therefore, requires our duty; of his infinite wisdom he certifies his promise of this grace to our senses, by an outward and visible act of the most solemn and influential character, thereby rendering to faith, "as the evidence of things not seen," an assurance which it could not otherwise have, and

to the exertions and obedience of redeemed sinners, a stimulus, a support, a confidence, which leads to victory over sin, to holiness of life, to eternal glory.

But, my brethren, as men, though fallen, are yet moral beings, and not machines; as, in that capacity, they have to account to GOD, and, according to their improvement or abuse of his grace, to be rewarded or punished everlastingly; this fundamental doctrine of the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT must be considered, and understood by us, in the nature of assistance and co-operation, and not otherwise. By the HOLY GHOST, "GOD worketh in us to will and to do;" and therefore he requires us to "work out our own salvation." By the HOLY GHOST, he illuminates our minds with the knowledge of divine truth, through the word spoken unto us by his Son; and therefore requires us to believe and obey the gospel—"to come to the light," and to "walk in the light, as children of the light." By the HOLY GHOST, he convinces us of sin in our nature and in our actions; prompts and suggests in our hearts serious thoughts, holy desires, good counsels; strengthens us to believe, inclines us to pray, inspires our petitions, and answers our prayers; and therefore requires us to follow the SPIRIT in his gracious leadings and teachings, as the way to life—the new and living way to the kingdom of Heaven, which our Saviour JESUS CHRIST has opened to all believers.

Thus much seemed necessary to be premised, my brethren, on the doctrine of spiritual influence in general, and on its special connexion with the sacrament of baptism, in order to the clearer understanding and more profitable enforcement of the exhortation of my text, which I shall now proceed to explain and apply.

"And grieve not the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

From the context, it is evident, that this exhortation is addressed by the apostle to baptized believers or professing Christians; and from the connexion with his previous admonitions in which it stands, it is equally evident, that it is an exhortation to a special duty, grounded on a particular circumstance in their spiritual condition, common to them all as Christians. From the terms in which the exhortation is expressed, it is clear, that the particular circumstance in their

spiritual condition, common to them all as Christians, is the gift of the Holy Spirit conferred at baptism, as the root from which present holiness, or participation of the divine nature, and future glory or eternal life in the kingdom of God, must spring, be carried on, and completed. And from the whole, the conclusion is plain and undeniable, that though all rightly baptized persons do receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, they may, nevertheless, deprive themselves of the benefits thence, and thence only, to be derived; and, by neglect and opposition, weary out the compassion of God, and provoke him to withdraw his help and succor.

These inferences from the text are supported by the whole tenor of Scripture, and by the whole structure of Christianity, as the religion of fallen sinners restored to a state of trial, and to be dealt with hereafter according to their improvement or abuse of the things freely given them of God. As spiritually dead, they must be spiritually revived and quickened, previously to any just demand from them of religious duty; nor is a state of trial even conceivable of such a creature as man fallen, without this previous interposition of supernatural power. On the other hand, as a state of trial involves both failure and success, and accountable conduct involves freedom of action, the assistance given to mankind, in order to the performance of rewardable duty, is precluded from whatever is necessitating and compulsory. An action being no otherwise moral than as it is free, the influence of the Spirit of God upon the hearts and lives of men cannot be divested of this character without cutting up all religion by the roots.

Had this sin-ruined world been allowed to continue to this day without the provision made for its restoration by the undertaking of the Son of God, as revealed in the gospel, a state of trial would have been impossible, because nothing but failure could have ensued. In like manner, were it the nature of that divine assistance, which God hath vouchsafed to fallen man in the gift of the Holy Ghost, that it could not be resisted and defeated, trial would be equally out of the question, and the retributions of justice and judgment, as applied to moral conduct, interdicted and precluded.

That this view of the subject is the only Scriptural and

practical one, is confirmed to us both by the letter of Scripture and by the entire structure of the religion we profess, as will be evident from the following considerations:

With the predictions of the Messiah by the prophets, were connected the predictions of a larger as well as a more general outpouring of the HOLY GHOST. The prophet Joel, in particular, was inspired to describe that new dispensation of religion under which a full measure of divine assistance should be bestowed upon men. "And it shall come to pass afterward," says the Almighty, "that I will pour out my SPIRIT upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; and also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids, in those days will I pour out my SPIRIT." Of this prediction, the day of Pentecost was the exact fulfilment; and the fact, as then witnessed to their senses, formed the argument with which St. Peter reached the hearts of three thousand of his hearers, and converted them to the faith.

On this promise, thus fulfilled, Christianity is constructed. On additional power being conferred to understand and apply the spiritual doctrines of the gospel, men are called upon and exhorted to believe and obey its life-giving precepts. And on their restored competency to receive or reject it, are the awful sanctions of everlasting life or eternal death reserved, to be applied by the righteous judgment of GOD according to the choice they shall now make.

We speak not to merely rational beings, when we warn them to repent and believe the gospel; but we address ourselves to rational beings, furnished by the goodness of GOD with a higher principle than reason, even with such a measure of the SPIRIT of GOD as puts life or death, heaven or hell, on their own determination, according to the conditions of the gospel. Nor yet, when we warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come, do we speak to mere machines, upon whose natures an unchangeable necessity is impressed by their Maker; but to moral beings who are restored to freedom of choice, by the regenerating power of the HOLY GHOST, and only as such capable of praise or blame, of reward or punishment. On this ground, our LORD addressed the Jews before, and his apostles the Gentiles after, the day of Pentecost. On this ground, the ministers of CHRIST address themselves to

all descriptions of men. To the Heathen and the unbaptized, they propose the gospel and its fuller measure of spiritual succor in the words of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost—"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, and ye shall receive the gift of the HOLY GHOST. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." To the baptized, who walk after the course of this world, they address the solemn warning, that they are "doing despite to the SPIRIT of grace"—that they are "accounting the blood of the covenant, wherewith they are sanctified, an unholy thing"—that they are "crucifying," to themselves, "afresh, the Son of GOD, and putting him to open shame." They caution them, that GOD hath threatened that his SPIRIT "shall not always strive with man"—that it would be "better for them, never to have known the way of righteousness, than to depart from the holy commandment delivered to them"—that, if they "quench the SPIRIT," it will be "impossible to renew them again to repentance." And, by these commanding motives—by the long suffering of GOD, and the worth of eternity—they exhort all such persons to "repent and be converted;" to "turn from the error of their ways," and to "walk in newness of life;" to seek the LORD in his pardoning mercy, before their day of grace is expended, and the door barred against them for ever.

And to Christians—to baptized believers—the ministers of CHRIST address those encouraging exhortations, which are derived from so effectual a helper as the HOLY GHOST. "GOD worketh in you to will and to do;" therefore, "work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling." "Ye have received, not the spirit which is of the world, but the SPIRIT which is of GOD;" therefore, "grow in grace and in the knowledge of the LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST." "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the HOLY GHOST, which is in you, which ye have of GOD?" therefore, "glorify GOD in your body and in your spirit, which are GOD'S."

Thus do all the obligations of religious duty meet every class and condition of mankind, on the ground of renewed ability imparted by the HOLY GHOST, sent down from heaven to abide with the Church for ever. And thus is it, indeed, that "reasonable service" which all are commanded to render unto their GOD and SAVIOUR; and for the neglect of which, as

there can be no reasonable excuse offered, so neither can there be any rational hope of escaping the vengeance threatened against all those who carelessly neglect to stir up the gift that is in them, and by continuing in sin, quench the SPIRIT, and drive him from them for ever. And very remarkable it is, my brethren, and well worthy your most serious consideration, that, as the renewal of the HOLY GHOST in fallen men is the foundation of all religious requirement from them; so is the assurance that we possess this gift of grace, exclusively referred to our baptism. From the obligations entered into, and the promises made and sealed, in this sacrament, all Christian instruction, exhortation, and hope, takes its rise; and this so strictly, that there is not an example of Christian duty required, or of Christian hope given, except of and to baptized persons. The first word of this salvation addressed to mankind, is, "Repent, and believe the gospel," "for GOD hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness." Now the gospel declares, that "except a man be born of water and of the SPIRIT, he cannot see the kingdom of GOD." The gospel, therefore, being set up in the world, and its administration commenced, the next command is, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of JESUS CHRIST, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the HOLY GHOST." And this command being obeyed, a new state, a new relation to GOD, commences; to which are given exceeding great and precious promises, both for the life that now is, and for that which is to come; and in which, the SPIRIT of GOD is the root from which all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed. We are baptized in the name of the Father; for the adoption of sons and daughters of the most high GOD—"Because ye are sons, GOD hath sent forth the SPIRIT of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father; wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of GOD through CHRIST." We are baptized in the name of the Son, for the atonement made for sin by his death upon the cross—"Know ye not, that so many of us, as were baptized into JESUS CHRIST were baptized into his death?" "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against

us, which was contrary to us; and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." We are baptized in the name of the HOLY GHOST; for the renewal of spiritual life in our souls, and for the resurrection of our mortal bodies from the dead. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us; by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the HOLY GHOST." "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his SPIRIT." "But if the SPIRIT of Him that raised up JESUS from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up CHRIST from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his SPIRIT that dwelleth in you."

And now, my brethren and hearers, we are prepared to understand and apply the exhortation of my text, and to perceive and feel the infinite importance of the obligations we have come under in our baptismal dedication to GOD; and the unspeakable value of the heavenly privileges thereby conferred upon us.

"And grieve not the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

And, first, to baptized persons, who yet proceed no farther in the Christian life.

Of such it may with truth be affirmed, that their whole course betrays such a disregard for the salvation wrought out for them by the sufferings of CHRIST, such an indifference to the means of grace, and such a preference for the world, as amounts fully to the guilt included in the expression of grieving the HOLY SPIRIT. For what can be more grievous and distressing to an affectionate and generous friend, than to find all his exertions for our welfare defeated by carelessness, or contempt, or perverse opposition? What estimate should we form of the heir to a princely estate, who was amply furnished by the owner with every appointment suitable to his condition and expectations, and yet estranged himself from his benefactor, despised his admonitions, and abused and prostituted his bounty? Would you hesitate to pronounce such an one ungrateful, unworthy, and justly liable to the forfeiture of present advantages, and of the future inheritance? Yet, just as surely as this judgment is the answer of every soul that now hears me, is it the con-

demnation of every baptized person who neglects the obligations and rejects the privileges of his covenanted relation to God; and by how much the longer time this disregard has been continued, by so much the greater is the offence and the danger attending it.

But not only by general disregard of religion is the Holy Ghost grieved and despited. Every neglect of his good motions in our hearts—every conviction of reason and conscience on the subject of religion, either resisted or put off to a more convenient season—is in a more especial manner a grieving of the Holy Spirit of God. For, as every conviction of wrong, and every excitement to what is good, springs from his holy influences within us; if these are treated with contempt, or disregarded in operation, or opposed in conduct —as in an earthly friend and benefactor it would produce concern, regret, sorrow, and indignation, proportioned to the circumstances of the case—in like manner is our heavenly friend and benefactor grieved and distressed at the wilful and obstinate neglect of his help and counsel, by those who are committed to his sole guidance for the attainment of eternal life, through the strait and narrow way of holiness.

To take for granted, as too many, alas! do, that only by out-breaking sin and profligate wickedness we grieve the Holy Spirit, is a most fatal mistake. Such a course as this not only grieves, but, if persisted in, quenches and drives away the only help provided for our conversion and sanctification. But the same consequence is no less certain to the more orderly and moral, who advance no farther in the cultivation of religion than external respect for its forms. As the Holy Spirit will not dwell with the soul polluted with sin, so neither will he always continue to strive with those who neglect to stir up the gift that is in them. The out-breaking sinner may be abandoned earlier by the Spirit of God, but not more certainly than the careless neglecter of his gracious motions in the heart, whether these shall be produced by the secret suggestions of thought and meditation, or by the more direct convictions of the conscience from the word of God. To resist them—to put them off till to-morrow—to stifle and drown them in the cares and dissipations of the world—is just as effectual to drive the Holy Ghost from his

temple, as a course of open and actual sin. For, "the manifestation of the SPIRIT is given to every man to profit withal." It is the rich talent of heaven's grace, which must be improved or forfeited; and when finally removed can never be restored.

Secondly, to professing Christians.

That by such the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD may be grieved and offended, the text gives us sufficient warning, my brethren, for the exhortation is addressed exclusively to them.

Greatly, therefore, are we concerned to watch against every approach to what may incur this guilt, for it is by small inroads that the enemy of souls gains his advantage over the believer. Whatever, then, has a tendency to impair the influence of religion in our own hearts, is calculated to grieve the HOLY SPIRIT. Of this description is all over-engagement with the business of the world, all unlawful conformity with its customs and ways. Whenever, therefore, these are allowed to interfere with our religious duties, whether public or private; when they occupy that portion of our thoughts which was once given freely to GOD; when they render seasons of devout retirement wearisome and dull; when these seasons are observed rather from duty than delight; when our spirit is more lively in the world than when retired with GOD; then may we well take the alarm that we have declined from our first love—that in something we have grieved the good SPIRIT, and apply ourselves earnestly and faithfully to regain his blessed presence. And, as this presence is no otherwise to be known by us than by the fruits of the SPIRIT in our lives, fervency and frequency in prayer, diligence and engagement in all our duties, with increasing love to GOD, form the true standard by which to determine it; and as these are in us, and abound, may we rejoice in his holy comfort, or, with strong crying and tears, deplore the sin which hath driven him from us, and implore his return. As the condition on which we receive this gift of the HOLY SPIRIT, and all the other mercies of GOD, is improvement—and the promise is sure, that "unto him" that hath, "shall be given"—growth in grace is not only a duty, but a test, to which to bring our spiritual condition; and, according as honest self-examination shall enable us to ascertain advancement or decline in the

divine life, may we conclude that we grieve or gratify the Holy Spirit.

That the exhortation of my text, as applied to professing Christians, is to be referred rather to their private and personal condition, than to their public and visible subjection to the gospel, must be evident from the consideration that it is not against open and palpable sin, as grieving the Holy Ghost, that they are exhorted. This would have vacated their claim altogether to be considered as Christians. It therefore refers to that more private, less discernible, but equally, if not more, efficacious determination of spiritual condition, which is evidenced by this the presiding principle of personal religion—by what is more particularly between God and our own souls, the hidden man of the heart. It will, indeed, show itself outwardly in the observance of all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord; but it will not be satisfied with this: it will look, and it will strive for that consolation and joy in the Holy Ghost, which is the sure fruit of sincere private devotion, and public profession of the faith of the gospel.

Where these unite, Christians are "an epistle of Christ, to be read of all men." They "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour," and promote the glory of God in the advancement of religion in the world. They fulfil their high calling. They "walk in the Spirit." "The Spirit of God witnesseth with their spirit, that they are the children of God." They grow in grace until ripe for glory. They pass to that immortality of blessedness of which the seal of the Spirit, impressed at baptism, is the earnest, and of which no power can divest them but their own personal guilt in grieving the Holy Spirit of God, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace.

And may God grant that this feeble attempt to instruct and warn, be accompanied with that blessing which shall make it a word in season to those who are present; that his glorious name may be exalted, not only by our professed subjection to the gospel, but by those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.

SERMON XXXVII.

THE ORIGIN AND USE OF WORLDLY AFFLICTIONS.

JOB v. 6, 7.

Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.

Common experience, my brethren, confirms the truth of the latter clause of my text, and, by this proof of a common lot and condition in life, establishes the testimony of Revelation to our common origin and common guilt, as sinners both by nature and practice, and to the wise and gracious purpose of that state of probation which the love of GOD hath granted us, through the mediation of JESUS CHRIST our Redeemer. And reason might instruct us, upon due reflection, that, as no effect can possibly be without its cause, none of the afflictions which befal mankind in the present life are the effects of blind chance, or of a fatal necessity; but that they are all under the direction and control of that infinite wisdom, and all pervading goodness, which governs the universe; and are intended, in the design of his Providence, for our good.

A state of probation necessarily includes variety of condition and qualifications in those who are subjected to it, as well as of failure and success in the best laid and most industriously pursued schemes of worldly happiness and enjoyment. In these, "the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill;" but there is a controlling Providence, in whose hand second causes are often turned round from their usual direction, and overthrow the expectations built up, too exclusively, perhaps, upon their operation. In this, as in all the appointments of GOD concerning us, there is a lesson of wisdom and instruction, of comfort and consolation, which

we would do well to learn, my brethren and hearers. For surely I look upon none who are entitled to say, Affliction cannot reach me: I am fortified against trouble: disappointment is shut out from my scheme of success and happiness in life! Alas! do I not rather look upon many who have drank, and are even now drinking, of that bitter, but wholesome cup, which, by calling us off from present delights, and turning memory back upon our sins, becomes an advocate for God, and gives the soul an opening to retrace her way to him!

That infinite wisdom doeth nothing in vain, and that infinite goodness intends the real benefit of his creatures in the administration of his fatherly Providence, is the sure ground on which it is our duty to submit with resignation to his holy will, and to endeavor to improve the afflictions wherewith he sees fit to try and chasten us, to the gracious purpose for which they are appointed: and as this may be comprised under the four following particulars, I shall endeavor thus to apply them,

First, to teach humility, and inspire a just sense of our own nothingness.

Secondly, to lead us to repentance for our past sins.

Thirdly, to wean us from the love of this present evil world, and from dependence on its perishing delights.

Fourthly, to try our faith, to improve our Christian graces, and perfect our souls for the presence of God.

"Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

I. First, one end of God's sending afflictions upon men, is, to teach them humility, and inspire a just sense of their own nothingness.

Every view we can take of the condition of man, demonstrates that there is no place for pride to be entertained. Derived from the dust, and returned to it again; his life short at best, and uncertain in its whole continuance; his knowledge limited; his power circumscribed; his faculties depraved, and his heart corrupted, what has he to be proud of? Yet what fruit of sin is more conspicuous in his fallen nature, than the workings of this corruption, in disregard of God,

and insolent contempt of his fellow creatures; in the swelling self-importance of prosperity, and the indignant rejection of adversity? "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after GOD," says the Psalmist; and to this, as to its main cause, may be traced the ungodliness of the prosperous and those who flourish in the things of this world. To such, therefore, adversity is the only remedy—the only thing that can teach them the folly of their way, by striking away the prop on which they lean, and showing them practically how every way insufficient and insecure their dependence is; and thereby admonishing them to build on a better foundation. And not only to the profane and open despisers of religion, who set their hearts upon the world, are afflictions the only remedy that can reach their case with any reasonable hope of effect; but such is the deceitfulness of men's hearts, that even in those who are religiously disposed, and in those who make a profession of religion, a continued course of uninterrupted prosperity is apt to foster the pride that is forgetful of GOD—that hardens the heart, and perverts the mind; against which evil GOD hath wisely appointed that mixture of blasted expectations and blighted prospects, which constitutes the afflictions of the present life, and is ordered and directed by his gracious Providence to bring men to a right sense of themselves, and of their dependence upon him; to humble their pride; to remind them of their own weakness and infirmity; and to put them upon a serious consideration of their true interests, as probationers for eternity. As it is the natural tendency of worldly success, and worldly delights, to blind the mind to spiritual things, and to increase the power of every corrupt propensity of our fallen nature; and as our gracious GOD is not willing that any should perish—affliction, in its various grades of disappointment, sorrow, suffering, pain, and sickness—is a necessary ingredient in the moral government of the world, and is, therefore, called in Scripture, the discipline and instruction of the LORD. But it is an instruction, which we must not only receive, but consider and apply, if we would profit by it; otherwise it serves only to stupify and harden, and, not unfrequently, to drive the rebellious sufferer into the deep impiety of charging GOD with cruelty and

injustice. The pride that is not subdued by adversity—the spirit that is not broken by the rod of affliction—the heart that is not humbled under such admonition from the providence of God—must be left to its own devices, and be forsaken, and given over to work out that overwhelming load of never ending misery and despair, from which it could neither be drawn by cords of love nor be deterred by the infliction of suffering. Yet how transient, generally speaking, is the effect of this great moral weapon, upon the conduct of men! How like the early cloud and the morning dew are the humbling thoughts, and the good resolutions, and the thankful acknowledgments, which the anguish of a sore bereavement, or the distress of a severe worldly loss, have prompted and drawn forth in the hour of calamity! How quickly are the vows then made forgotten, and the respite then granted overlooked! Who cannot call to mind the instance in which this is true of himself? And must not then the stroke be repeated? If God hath not given us over to a reprobate mind, must not some severer blow from his hand be hanging over us? Yes, and there is but one way to avert it; and that is, to let past afflictions and present mercies now do their office, and humble us under the mighty hand which holds the issues of life and of death, and controls the changes and chances of this shifting world. Sure we may be, if we have faith only as a grain of mustard seed, that whatever our heavenly Father sends us must be good for us. Let us, then, search for the good that is hidden under his chastenings, and we shall find it in that humble and lowly heart in which God delights to dwell; that resigned spirit to which he grants the consolations of heavenly comfort, and that holy hope which waits with patience, and endures with constancy, those light afflictions, which are the bitter, but wholesome "admonition of the Lord."

II. Secondly, another end of God's sending afflictions upon men, is, to lead them to repentance for their past sins.

Repentance is that state of mind, which is truly alive to the heinous nature of sin as an offence against God, and sincerely engaged to avoid the commission of it, and subdue its power over the corrupt and perverted faculties of a fallen nature. As such, it is that state of mind, that disposition of

the soul, to which every person capable of reflection and conscious of sin should strive to bring himself; because it is the indispensable condition of obtaining the favor of God and the promises of the gospel; for "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

When, therefore, we reflect on the usual consequences of wordly prosperity, or of over-engagement in those pursuits which lead to it, we must see at once that no condition can be more adverse to the entertainment of religious truth. When a wicked, that is, an irreligious man, prospers in all his worldly affairs, and his designs are followed with constant success; when he is able to gratify all his appetites, and to indulge himself in the enjoyment of ease and pleasure, or even to anticipate in his thoughts the time when this shall be in his power; it is no wonder he should forget God, and lean more and more upon himself. "Is not this great Babylon that I have builded?" said Nebuchadnezzar in the pride of his heart; and is not this the secret thought of many besides the Heathen king? In the intoxication of success, conscience is perverted or silenced in the worldly minded man; the serious exhortations of religion, if he venture at all to hear them, are unheeded, while he says to his soul, "thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Now in this condition—and it is that of many, of many too, who are neither great nor increased in goods, but whose hearts are glued down to the world—in this condition, what remedy can be applied but the rod only? The greatest blessing—the strongest proof of the mercy of God towards such persons is, the sending upon them some great affliction, some arresting and awakening judgment, which, like a severe medicine in a very dangerous distemper, may rouse them from their lethargy, may oblige them to consider, and thus lay the foundation for repentance, and engage them in the care of their souls. This is the true purpose of every dealing of God with his creatures. His goodness as well as his severity is intended to lead men to repentance; nor is the latter ever resorted to until the former is disregarded. "God doth not willingly afflict the children of men;" but, like a tender father, reserves the rod as his strange work, as his wise and salutary appointment for their good.

If afflictions be thus fitted, when duly applied, to reclaim the sinner from the folly of his way, much more are they suited to convince good men of their failings, to make them more sensible of their errors, to bring them to a closer self examination, and to a more perfect repentance and amendment. The very best of us, my brethren, are far, very far, from being what we should be, what we profess to be. Nay, we know not thoroughly what manner of spirit we are of, or what great imperfections lie hid in the mazes of our corrupt hearts; and it is by afflictions wisely ordered, that these are discovered, that they may be amended. Every serious Christian can say with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted;" and it is only when thus applied that afflictions are sanctified to us, and strength given from the HOLY SPIRIT to bear up under them, and to derive comfort from them. A rebellious spirit under the chastening of affliction is like a wild beast caught in a net; he struggles and rages against the enclosure, but the affliction holds him fast, and becomes stronger; he bites the cords, but he sees not the mighty, though invisible hand, which spread the net, nor yet the gracious purpose wherefore he is thus visited. Not so the Christian. He knows it is the LORD, and he bends low before his Father's displeasure. He feels the stroke but he kisses the rod. He looks carefully for his offence; he amends it, and treasures up the correction against its repetition. Thus he can say with David, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word."

For this reason it is, that the afflictions and other sufferings GOD sends upon his people and servants, are declared in Scripture to be marks of his love and care towards them. "We are chastened of the LORD," says St. Paul, "that we should not be condemned with the world;" and our LORD himself declares, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent." In the very nature of things, afflictions cannot but be grievous and painful, when they are actually upon us; but the end they are intended to answer—the great advantage to be derived from them, by religious improvement—though it cannot, perhaps, bring us to desire them; yet is it amply sufficient to produce submission under them, thankfulness for them, and a diligent ap-

plication of them to God's gracious purpose in sending them. And, as this is to be gathered from the particular circumstances of the case, we see in this the wisdom of the appointment. Affliction makes even the most thoughtless, serious; and it is in seasons of adversity that the voice of conscience, unheeded in the hurry of business and in the whirl of pleasure, is most likely to be listened to—to point to the very cause and occasion of the chastening, and to prompt to repentance, and amended life.

III. Thirdly, another end of God's afflicting men, is, to wean them from the love of this present world, and from dependence on its perishing delights.

The Scriptures are in nothing more earnest, than in warning Christians against the dangerous influence which present and sensible things exert against the spirit and the power of religion. Being "contrary the one to the other," the conflict is perpetual, nor can it be ended but by the victory of one. To reconcile them, and give to each what it claims, is impossible; and, in the attempt, millions have lost themselves for ever, and millions are yet willing to make the perilous adventure. "No man can serve two masters;" where one is present and visible, and the other, though not absent, is invisible; where one holds out his rewards to the senses and to present enjoyment, and the other offers chiefly what is future —far distant—unknown to sense, and discernible only by faith; the very attempt to serve both, is proof that the world is already preferred. Were there nothing, then, equally present and sensible with the enjoyments of the world—nothing to come practically in aid of faith, and remind us of our true, though invisible master—nothing to prove the promises of the one we have preferred false and deceitful—the corruption of nature would yet further prevail against the influence of religion, and the god of this world triumph, in the mastery of his temptations. But afflictions—thanks be to God—afflictions in all their varied shapes, disappointments, losses, sufferings, sorrows from many sources—all come in aid of the truth of God, and of our immortal souls; and by stripping the mask from the promises of the world, by proving their inability either to arrest or repair the sorrow of the heart, bring deliverance from the snare of their enchantment.

We know, indeed, and we profess to believe, that the promises of the world cannot be permanent. We have seen them fail others, at their utmost need, and death will finally break the most sure possession of them. Yet all this is insufficient to overcome the delusion—experience, only, can prove their emptiness; and suffering must teach the obstinate to build upon a surer foundation. How many have cause to thank God that he hath thus dealt with them, and, by domestic affliction or worldly loss, opened their eyes to see, and their hearts to feel, that they were building on the sand and leaning on a broken reed? To how many has the hour of worldly calamity proved the season of reflection and returning to God? And to how many has continued adversity been the wholesome medicine that resisted the influence of the world, and proved the health of the soul? Well do we know, my brethren, that there is nothing more hurtful to the progress of religion than much engagement, even with the lawful business of life; insensibly almost, but too surely, it usurps the place of better things, and damps the ardor of the soul in its aspirations after God. It intrudes upon the time devoted to meditation and prayer, and distracts the thoughts in the exercise of devotion. The thorns and briers choke the seed; but God, in his mercy, sends some affliction, some loss, some startling providence, and the spell is broken—reflection succeeds—repentance brings forth its fruits, and greater watchfulness teaches "so to use this world as not abusing it." Thus do we perceive how the various disappointments, losses, and sufferings of the present life, work together in weaning us from the world, by proving its utter inability to secure to us its own promises, to comfort us under their privation, or to restore the breach which God hath made in their possession. But it is a work to which we must be parties, my brethren, by serious consideration; by watchfulness and care, in following their wise direction; and by thankful submission to their salutary correction.

IV. Fourthly, another end of God's afflicting men, is, to try their faith—to improve their Christian graces, and perfect their souls for the presence of God.

As the improvement or abuse of the present life will form the basis of our future existence, it is only by trials suited to

the various conditions of our being, that any discrimination of moral character can be made: and as the foundation of all religious reliance, and of all religious exertion, is faith, or unqualified dependence on the divine veracity; it is therefore consistent with, if, indeed, it is not inseparable from, a state of retribution, that this foundation should be exhibited by its proper superstructure of obedience and submission. To this the whole Christian system is adapted, and, as its sanctions are all invisible and future, Christians are said to "walk by faith and not by sight." Now, whether they do thus walk, there are but two tests: one is, obedience to the divine command; the other is, submission to the divine will; and in the union of both consists the perfection of our moral nature. But submission to the divine will can only be manifested in things contrary to our own will. Afflictions and privations, therefore, are just as necessary to manifest our faith and reliance upon God, in submission to his holy will, as active obedience is, to manifest our actual subjection to his righteous government as Sovereign of the universe.

Hence we learn, my brethren, to estimate the mixed condition of the present life aright, to discern the gracious purpose of those things which are grievous to flesh and blood, and to apply them to the increase and establishment of that faith for the trial of which they are appointed, and by the power of which only they can be supported. The Christian who has met the disappointment of his fondest earthly hope without repining—who has been smitten in the affection of his heart without murmuring—who has endured unjust reproach with patience, and pain and suffering with resignation, "looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith," presents a spectacle, upon which heaven looks with approbation. His faith has overcome the world; and his "light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

As faith is the support of all Christian graces, the trials to which it is subjected, by the afflictions and sufferings of the present life, have a direct tendency to strengthen and improve all those virtues which form the beauty of the Christian. As "the trial of our faith worketh patience," so doth an acquaintance with suffering open the heart to compassion,

and the hand for relief. A disposition naturally tender will feel for distress; and a bountiful hand will administer to the necessities of others. But it is a fellow feeling with the occasion—the having drank of the same cup—that draws from the heart its holiest sympathies, its most fervent prayer, and from the hand its most active and untiring beneficence. He who "went about doing good," with a compassion unbounded, and a liberality unequalled—was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He "who knew no sin," who had no infirmity to be purged away, who needed the improvement of no virtue, was yet "made perfect through sufferings;" and through the same purification of the dross and corruption of our fallen nature, must we pass, if we would "be like him, and see him as he is."

Sinners must suffer, my brethren, necessarily, unavoidably; yet—"Oh! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of GOD"—yet, in appointing suffering for sinners in the present life, GOD, even the most merciful GOD, hath so ordered it, that afflictions may be made a means of grace, and suffering the road to glory. "Man is," indeed, "born to trouble, even as the sparks fly upward;" but through afflictions duly improved, and trouble patiently borne, after the example and through the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, his soul, that ethereal spark from him who alone hath immortality, may also mount upwards to its bright and glorious original, where "tears shall be wiped from its eyes, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away for ever."

To conclude: Did "our afflictions come forth of the dust, and our troubles spring out of the ground;" were there no other cause to produce them, no other hand to direct them, no other counsel to design them, no other power to over-rule and remove them, than the fortuitous results of unintelligible chance, or the blind effects of inevitable fate, there could be no rational comfort or support to a considerate mind, under the various misfortunes and calamities of life. For what is the support of the unbeliever in the day of adversity, or what is his hope when death demands his soul? His expectations, at the best, are slight as the spider's web, and his hope like the chaff which the wind scattereth away from the face of the earth. His prosperity and mirth can be but for a mo-

ment, and his adversity must terminate in despair. For what support in the day of adversity, or what hope in the hour of death, can be derived from fate or chance, things which have no being? Where is the consolation in being told that our miseries arise from the necessity of fate, and, therefore, we must submit to them? Where is the comfort in considering that others perhaps are as miserable as ourselves; and that it cannot be long before all the calamities of life will be closed by death? Alas! for that misery that sees no relief but death, and death unattended by hope beyond the grave! And yet this is all the comfort that infidelity can afford, and all the hope of him that is "without GOD in the world." Were there no other argument, then, for religion, my brethren and hearers, we might find one in the afflictions and sufferings which abound in the present life, and in the death which shrouds the brightest of its prospects and the largest of its promises, in the daily deepening gloom of its sure but uncertain approaches. Severe as these afflictions are in themselves, without GOD they must be intolerable. Painful as is the divorce between soul and body by the stroke of death, without GOD it must be the horrible despair of interminable suffering and extinguished hope. The pretences of philosophy, of fortitude of spirit, of despising pain, and looking upon death as merely putting an end to our being, will then be found a vain and empty delusion. And the proof, (though it will be too late,) the proof will then be found that he only is capable of any true comfort and support under the miseries of life and in the hour of death, who is convinced that all things are directed well and to good ends, by the wise providence of Almighty GOD; and who, by a life of obedience to his commands and cheerful submission to his will, has secured the favor of the supreme Disposer of all things.

Learn, then, your privilege, my dear hearers; and, as you can neither escape the calamities of life nor the penalty of death, employ your best diligence to provide against both, by acquainting yourselves with GOD. He spreads before you the counsel of his wisdom, the rich provision of his grace, and the promise of his mercy. He warns you of the bitter ingredients that are mixed up in the cup of human life. Of this cup all must drink, and some drain it even to the dregs.

But the same GOD unveils eternity with all its glories as the prize of your high calling; and wisely and wondrously hath he wrought, that "all things," even afflictions themselves, shall "work together for good to them that love GOD." "Be ye, then, workers together with him," that all things may be yours; that shielded by his power and protected by his favor, neither "tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, may be able to separate you from the love of CHRIST."

SERMON XXXVIII.

THE LOVE OF GOD TO SINNERS.

1 JOHN iii. 1.

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of GOD!

The frequent and serious consideration of the privileges bestowed upon the Christian by the condescending goodness of GOD, is calculated, beyond any other train of thought, to engage the heart, and fill it with those sentiments of love and veneration which form the noblest attainment, and produce the highest gratification, the human soul is capable of, while encumbered with its tenement of flesh and blood.

In like manner, to meditate on the awful gulf of ruin and despair into which sin hath sunk the human race, and to contrast it with the gracious and merciful provision against its destructive power revealed in the gospel, is efficacious, beyond any other known means, to awaken the sinner to the enormity of his guilt and the danger of his condition, to win him back to his duty, and to work that change in the feelings and affections of his soul, which, by divine grace, is made effectual to the sanctification of his nature.

That "GOD was in CHRIST reconciling the world unto himself;" that "he hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation through our LORD JESUS CHRIST;" that "JESUS CHRIST came into the world to save sinners;" and that even the chief of sinners, not excluding his very murderers, are encouraged to come to him, and warranted to hope for forgiveness on their sincere repentance,—these, my brethren and hearers, are surely "glad tidings of great joy," calculated to draw forth Christian thankfulness and praise, to awaken in the hardest heart some sense of the divine love thus manifested, and to draw to the LORD JESUS CHRIST for life and salvation those who, without him, must perish for ever.

"Behold," then, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!"

There can be no question, I think, that the apostle here addresses himself to those who had embraced the gospel, and adorned their Christian profession by a walk and conversation in life conformed to the rules of our holy religion; of course, it is to the faithful Christian only, that the character of a son or daughter of Almighty God fully applies. And it is only by the Christian, by the true believer, that the character can be felt and valued as the most ennobling privilege his nature can be raised to. Even St. John himself seems to admire at so exalted a station being assigned to fallen mortals. "Behold," says he, as if lost in admiration—"behold, how condescendingly gracious the Father of mercies is in permitting so endearing a relation to be claimed and enjoyed by creatures such as we are!" And as he used it to enforce upon his hearers a corresponding diligence and faithfulness in all the duties of their holy profession, I trust it may be made profitable to us also in the consideration of those particulars which must combine in us in order to attain the high distinction of sons and daughters of the living God.

To this end I shall endeavor to show,

First, that the great and leading purpose of the gospel of Christ is, to restore and renew in fallen creatures the moral image and likeness of God, lost by original transgression.

Secondly, I shall lay before you the proof from Scripture, that only to those in whom this change is effected can the title of son or daughter of God be rightly applied.

Thirdly, I shall take notice of the privileges conferred on those who are thus denominated.

Lastly, I shall point out by what means so great salvation hath been wrought out and procured for us; and close, with a suitable application.

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!"

I. First, I am to show, that the great and leading purpose of the gospel of Christ is, to restore and renew in fallen creatures the moral image and likeness of God, lost by original transgression.

Just conceptions of the nature and properties of the Su-

preme Being lead us assuredly to this, as the gracious purpose of the religion of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. "GOD is light, and in him is no darkness at all," as the apostle expresses it. "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," and can have no fellowship with unrighteousness.

Just views of the condition and qualities of human nature, show that it is the reverse of the divine nature; and in this, experience, both of ourselves and others, confirms the truth of revelation—"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. They go astray as soon as they be born." All communion, therefore, with GOD, is impossible, without a change of nature in him or in us; but GOD is by nature unchangeable. It is on the part of the creature, then, that the change is needed, and must take place, in order to regain his favor and be fitted for his presence. This is the basis of all just reasoning on this vital subject, my friends; and, however humiliating, cannot be gainsayed with any show of faith, or overlooked with any hope of spiritual attainment. As the sick only need the physician, so, likewise, none but the lost and undone look for the Saviour. CHRIST has no form or comeliness till the extremity of this truth is brought home to the heart, in the full extent of its helpless misery by nature.

Of what character the change must be, belongs to GOD only to declare. He is the being offended by sin, and alone entitled to make known the conditions of pardon and reconciliation to sinners. To expect his favor, then, or even his mercy, upon conditions of our own devising, is not only folly, but the most presumptuous sin which mortals, furnished with revelation, can be guilty of.

By what means this change is to be wrought in our hearts, it is equally the prerogative of Almighty GOD to determine. Sin is not only a spiritual offence, manifested by an outward action, but it is a spiritual death; the destruction of the divine image, or moral likeness to GOD in man; from which we have naturally no more ability to recover ourselves, than we have to recover the body from natural death.

And it is not only his prerogative, but it is of his infinite mercy and compassion, that the means are afforded us. Our salvation, in all its provisions, is wholly of grace, my brethren and hearers—of the free and unmerited love of GOD for

our souls, betrayed into sin and ruin by the art and subtlety of the great enemy of GOD and man. And as we fell through weakness, and not of malice against GOD, as did our adversary; therefore, GOD was pleased to provide recovery for us. But if the means of recovery are refused or neglected, now that they are offered, it will stamp our conduct with the same malicious character, and consign us to the same interminable torment to which our enemy is reserved.

Hence it is plain, GOD being our teacher by his word, that as the entertainment of sin vitiated and corrupted our original nature, rendered us unfit for the presence and enjoyment of GOD, and expelled us from paradise; return to his favor, and recovery of the happiness we have lost, can no otherwise be accomplished than by the destruction of sin, both in its love and in its practice, and by regaining those pure desires and holy affections—improved and confirmed by the duties and the trials of the present life—which alone can fit us for the presence of GOD and the blessed society of heaven. The gospel accordingly keeps in view this great purpose throughout; and by every motive, and argument, and figure, which can be applied to rational beings who have to account to GOD, urges, and exhorts, and warns, and entreats them to believe and obey what GOD hath revealed, as the fixed and unchangeable condition on which eternal life is to be obtained.

Hence also, the necessity of that indispensable change of the heart as well as of the life, which is expressed in the Scriptures by being born again. As spiritually dead—by nature averse to and incapable of divine and heavenly things—fallen creatures must be "renewed in the spirit of their minds," by the enlightening, quickening, and convincing power of the HOLY GHOST. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; that which is born of the SPIRIT, is spirit," says the highest authority to which man can bring his inquiries. By this new and spiritual birth then, only, is it that our denomination is changed from that of "earthly, sensual, devilish," to that of spiritual, heavenly minded, and holy; and, as thereby become "partakers of the divine nature," dignified with the appellation of sons and daughters of the LORD GOD Almighty. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of GOD; even to them that believe on his

name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD."

Thus clear, express, connected, and confirmed by experience, is the account which GOD has vouchsafed to give to his creatures, in the Scriptures of truth, of his purpose and grace in CHRIST JESUS. And as he hath also appointed the means and directed the manner in which they are to be sought for and applied, by them, for the attainment of this change; and as all, without exception, are not only invited, but commanded to believe the gospel, and to come to CHRIST for the renewal of the divine image; whosoever shall fail herein, must therefore fail because darkness is preferred to light, this perishing world to a heavenly inheritance, and the "bondage of corruption, to the glorious liberty of the children of GOD."

Neglect of the gospel, therefore, is the broad and beaten road to destruction, in which so many are travelling rapidly to their graves. And neglect of the means of grace is the refusal of relationship to GOD, not only as involving contempt of his command, but as precluding the possibility of that indispensable change of heart, that birth from above, without which, obtained in the present life and retained by personal holiness, we are warned that "a man cannot see the kingdom of GOD." And it ought to be a subject of the deepest alarm to every soul who is placed within the reach of this mighty blessing by the providence of GOD, who is yet a stranger to its operation and effects. For, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

II. Secondly, I am to lay before you the proof from Scripture, that only to those in whom this change is effected, can the title of son or daughter of GOD be rightly applied.

In one sense, my brethren, as the creatures of GOD, the work of his hands, all mankind are the children of GOD; and had nothing interposed to divide and separate the Father from his children, this title would have been good and sufficient for all the blessings the nature given them was capable of. But sin caused the division and separation of this relation as absolutely as extinction of being could have done. For, had the law not been found in the hand of a mediator, the continuance of the human race would have been defeated by the infliction of the penalty on the original transgressors.

God is, indeed, the "Father of the spirits of all flesh." But it is solely through the undertaking of his only begotten Son that he is so. Abstract the world of mankind from this connecting link between God and man, deprive it of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the relation of Creator and creature is at once divested of all paternal and filial connexion, and a race of sinners are left under a hopeless blank of short and uncertain existence, terminating in death and despair.

Through sin, men are spiritually dead to God; and, as a dead child cannot inherit, there is no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God for the sinner. This the Scriptures set forth to us in every variety of expression and figure which can impress this truth upon the understanding and upon the consciences of men. Thus St. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, who were a Christian Church gathered from among the Gentiles, reminds them, that before their conversion "they were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world;" that they were under a state of condemnation and death; "you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." "Even when we were dead in sins," says the apostle, changing the person to denote the universality of the condition—"Even when we were dead in sins, God hath quickened us together with Christ." To the Colossians, also, "And you, being dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." And to the Corinthians, likewise, he asserts the same truth argumentatively, from the death of Christ, "Because we thus judge," says this apostle, "that if one died for all, then were all dead."

In confirmation of this point, the covenant relation of believers to God as his children, according to the Scriptures, is derived exclusively from their new birth or spiritual regeneration. By truly embracing the gospel, men are translated from this state of death, called "the power of darkness," into "the kingdom of God's dear Son;" and the sacrament or mystery by which this is certified outwardly, is represented as the burial of the old man or dead sinner, and the resurrection of the new man or renewed believer and child of God. Hence St. Paul, writing to the Romans, thus expresses it,

"Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as CHRIST was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." And to the Colossians in nearly the same words, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein ye are also risen with him, through the faith of the operation of GOD." And to the Ephesians still more expressly, "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of GOD;" and "are builded together in CHRIST for an habitation of GOD through the SPIRIT."

In like manner our Christian duties are all exhorted to and enforced from the true intent of this sacrament, from the obligations then entered into, and from the spiritual ability therein conferred upon all rightly baptized persons. For thus St. Paul argues with the Roman Christians, "He that is dead is freed from sin. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof, but yield yourselves unto GOD, as those that are alive from the dead; for sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace." So also, writing to the Ephesian Christians, "This I say, therefore, and testify in the LORD, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind—that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts—and that ye put on the new man, which, after GOD, is created in righteousness and true holiness. Be ye, therefore, followers of GOD, as dear children." To the Colossians, likewise, "If ye, then, be risen with CHRIST, seek those things which are above, where CHRIST sitteth at the right hand of GOD. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with CHRIST in GOD."

Equally clear and conclusive is the testimony of Scripture, that only as our baptismal engagements are fulfilled unto holiness of life, are we truly the sons and daughters of GOD.

Our Saviour CHRIST "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Where this purpose, then, is answered, and not otherwise, our relation to CHRIST by baptism becomes effectual for all the blessings of the holy

covenant ratified in his blood. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," says St. Paul, "and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." But though it is thus expressed in Scripture of all rightly baptized persons, yet must it ever be taken with the warning which our Lord himself has given; for, while it is certain, that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," it is equally certain, that "he that believeth not," notwithstanding he may be baptized, "shall be damned." We read also of tares and wheat growing together in the field of Christ; of children of the kingdom, and children of the wicked one, within the pale of Christ's visible Church; and our own experience certifies to the melancholy truth, that there are thousands of baptized persons who yet walk according to the course of this world, in all manner of sinful compliance with its wickedness. But such is not the spot or mark of God's children; for "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts;" and, therefore, if such persons continue thus regardless of their Christian calling and election, our Lord threatens to blot their names out of his book: and if they shall not be found written therein, in the great day of eternity, there will no inheritance be found for them in his eternal and glorious kingdom. For, "without holiness"—without a moral likeness to God, "no man shall see the Lord."

III. Thirdly, I am to notice the privileges conferred on those who are thus denominated the sons of God.

The first is justification. This is a compound term, my brethren, in its signification; and is used in Scripture to express the state or condition of a truly penitent sinner, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, as offered in the gospel. To such an one, the atonement made for sin by the death of Christ, the cleansing virtue of his blood shed upon the cross, and the infinite merit of his spotless righteousness, is his shield and defence against the just demands of the holy law which he hath broken. These he offers to God by faith, as his only plea for mercy and forgiveness. These, his Great High Priest presents before the presence of God in his behalf; and he is, therefore, and by virtue of their value in the sight of God, absolved from the guilt of his sin, released from

the claims of the law upon his blood, accounted a righteous person, and, as such, accepted of GOD. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with GOD, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of GOD." "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in CHRIST JESUS, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

The next privilege of the true believer is, adoption into the family of GOD; whereby, whatever is provided for the comfort and welfare of the household of faith is also dispensed to him.

In the Church militant, this consists in the succor and help of the HOLY SPIRIT; the nourishment of the word and sacraments; the enjoyment of GOD's promises; and the comfort of Christian fellowship, with growth in grace, and increasing desire for more of GOD. In the Church triumphant, it will consist in the vision of GOD in glory; in the constant presence of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; in the society of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect; in the unlimited fulness of all holy affections and happy tempers, enjoyed in mansions of love, and joy, and peace, and blessedness, for ever. "According as He hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by JESUS CHRIST, to himself." "Because ye are sons, GOD hath sent forth the SPIRIT of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

Another privilege of the sons of GOD is, sanctification; which is to be understood of a state or condition in life, and of the means of maintaining it.

The state or condition is, separation from the world and dedication to GOD; in which sense all Christians, by virtue of their baptism, are a holy people unto the LORD. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," says St. Peter: and, generally, in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the epistles, Christians are addressed and spoken of, collectively, as saints. This state or condition comprises, also, power over temptation to sin; and on this are grounded all the exhortations to Christians to cease from sin—"Sin shall not have dominion over you," says St.

Paul; "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able." And St. John tells us, that "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;" which is not to be understood of sinless perfection in any fallen creature, but of the wilful commission and allowance of any known act of sin and disobedience to the law of God.

The means of maintaining this condition are, the clear discoveries of the will of God, which every Christian is furnished with in the Scriptures, and which every Christian should constantly study and apply—"For the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." And with this, the presence and help of the Holy Spirit; the promise and participation of which, all Christians receive at their baptism—"Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God." "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought." "But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered."

The word sanctification being connected in our minds with the idea of perfect holiness or sinless perfection—and the heart witnessing, at the same time, how far short the best of us come of reaching this point—has operated against the true and scriptural meaning of the doctrine, and, at the same time, against the necessary duty of understanding and practising what it requires. God hath indeed called us to holiness; but he doth not confer sanctification, as a particular gift or special endowment, upon any one, in the ordinary administration of his grace. He has graciously instituted the state of salvation into which we are called, and provided the sure means of our becoming sanctified or holy persons, in the fullest sense of the word. And it is our part, my brethren, to rejoice and be thankful for this distinguishing

privilege; to use diligently and faithfully the appointed means, in the full confidence that his promised blessing will make them effectual, "to present us holy, and unblameable, and unreprovable in his sight," through the merits and death of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

A fourth privilege of the believer or child of GOD is, assurance, or the "abiding witness of the SPIRIT," as it is expressed in the Scriptures. As it is from the HOLY GHOST that all spiritual attainment in man is derived; so it is by him, that all trust and confidence in the promises of GOD is sustained and upheld. But this witness is not a direct, supernatural communication to the believer by the SPIRIT of GOD; but the concurring testimony of that SPIRIT with his spirit; and is consequently the result of examination and comparison, not only of the feelings, but of the fruits of religion—of the life and conversation of the man—with the standard, as contained in the precepts and examples set forth in the Scriptures for this great and necessary purpose—"For if our heart condemn us," says the apostle, "GOD is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward GOD." He who sincerely endeavors and strives to come up to this standard —whose meat and drink it is, to know and to do the will of his heavenly Father, though with much of felt, acknowledged, and bewailed deficiency and imperfection—may safely take the comfort of Christian assurance, "being confident that He who hath begun a good work in him, will perform it until the day of JESUS CHRIST;" that, as his adopted child, "GOD will never leave him or forsake him;" that, as one of CHRIST'S sheep, who "hear his voice and follow him," he will give unto him the blessing of eternal life—will "raise him up at the last day," and own and "confess him before his Father and the holy angels." "My sheep shall never perish," says CHRIST, "neither is any able to pluck them out of my hand." And, by the appointment of Almighty GOD, who ruleth over all, "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."

IV. I come now, in the last place, to point out by what means so great salvation hath been wrought out and procured for us; and then conclude.

On this head, I thank GOD, my hearers, that we are all informed. It needs not that I should tell you, as of something new, that all blessings, both temporal and spiritual—all favors and privileges here—all hopes and expectations for hereafter, are the purchase of the cross of CHRIST; that as undone sinners, we have nothing wherewith to avert the wrath and propitiate the favor of a pure and holy GOD; and that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, only the name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth." But greatly is it needed, that I should call your attention, as to a question of life and death, and that eternal too, to the use you are making of this knowledge—to the effect this gracious communication from GOD has had upon your hearts; to rouse your consciences to reflect what the consequences will be if you continue to disregard the solemn vows you are under by your baptism—to slight the high privileges therein conferred upon you—and to mangle the holy hope which springs up to the sinner from the blood of CHRIST, by a life of sin and unconcern for salvation. And what argument so powerful to this end as that suggested by my text? What so likely to prevail with an ingenuous mind as the long-suffering of our heavenly Father, in continuing to spare, under so many and so great provocations, and still keeping the door open for disobedient children to return and regain their place in his family? And this is yet left to you, my unconverted hearers, by a true and timely repentance. This is the only privilege you have not forfeited; and it is that one by which alone the others can be regained, and all the blessings of GOD's house and family become your happy portion.

"Behold," then, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of GOD." Contemplate the gracious plan of our redemption by the LORD JESUS CHRIST. Consider its suitableness to the condition of fallen sinners. Meditate upon the glorious privileges bestowed on all who receive him as "the LORD their righteousness;" and learn herein "how GOD commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet enemies, he sent his Son to die for us."

This, my brethren and hearers, is the affecting point in the

great work of our redemption. It is not that we are redeemed, and heaven once more opened to the hopes of sinners; but it is the manner of that redemption—the abounding love manifested in the Father surrendering up his only begotten Son, and the Son consenting to endure humiliation and death, for the love of our souls—which points it to the heart, which melts the stubborn hardness of its sinful corruption, and softens it to godly sorrow and sincere repentance—which moves it to love, to honor, to trust, and serve Him, who so loved us, as to "bear our sins in his own body upon the cross," that he might "redeem us to GOD by his blood."

"Herein is love," my brethren, "not that we loved Him, but that he loved us;" and herein is displayed the gracious purpose of that memorial of his death, which he hath commanded his disciples to celebrate, until he shall come again to take them to his heavenly kingdom.

GOD grant, dear brethren in CHRIST, that, through the power of his grace, we may so "discern the LORD's body," that all its holy purposes and heavenly privileges may be answered in and confirmed to our souls! And O, that a beam from heaven, a ray of light from GOD's HOLY SPIRIT, may penetrate every heart, and light up in every bosom a lively sense of all that we owe to the love of GOD in CHRIST JESUS; that while we again pledge ourselves to him and to each other, in the solemn commemoration of his divine love, we may so eat his flesh and drink his blood as to be "filled with all grace and heavenly benediction," and so "made one body with him, that he may dwell in us and we in him."

SERMON XXXIX.

CAIN AND ABEL.

GENESIS iv. 3, 4, 5.

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel, and unto his offering: but, unto Cain and to his offering, he had not respect.

All Scripure being given by inspiration of GOD, and set forth for our learning, contains in it all that can be needed to make us wise unto salvation. From this treasure-house of divine wisdom, we may draw whatever is profitable for religious instruction, and, what should enhance its value to us, no where else can we be sure of saving truth. For it not only comprehends the rules and precepts by which we should regulate our thoughts and words, our affections and conduct in this life; but, in compassion to our weakness, wilfulness, and inadvertence, it sets before us, as in a glass, the conduct and conversation of our kind—of men of like passions, of the same fallen nature, with ourselves, in every variety of condition, from the very commencement of that manifestation of mercy and grace which it pleased GOD to vouchsafe to a ruined, sin-struck race of beings.

In the numerous examples of faith and holiness, of unbelief and rebellion, which are therein recorded for our warning and admonition, we may readily trace the operation and effect of faith in GOD, in obedience to his word and commandment; and the influence of unbelief, in such a negligent acknowledgment of his supreme majesty and dominion, as leads to a presumptuous disregard and contempt of his commandments, and of the appointed and only means of mercy and acceptance for sinners. Of this we have a most instructive and awakening example given us, in two brothers, the first born of a race of fallen creatures—an example which I design, with the help of GOD, to apply for the edification of all

present, and to the particular purpose of our meeting together this day.

Assembled, my brethren, for the express purpose of worshipping the God of our salvation—to offer up our united prayers and praises to our heavenly Father—to own and confess our crucified Lord, and to celebrate the solemn memorial of his sacrifice and death for our deliverance from sin and death eternal—it must be profitable for us all, to consider carefully this earliest act of religious worship of which we have any knowledge, lest we also present an offering to which God shall not have respect. For we read in the text, that "the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but, unto Cain and to his offering, he had not respect."

The first inquiry that starts in the mind, relative to this portion of Scripture, is, Wherein consisted the difference in their offerings, in the sight of God? We know that "God is no respecter of persons;" and as to the brothers, there is nothing previously said to mark any difference between them, except in their occupations, the one being a husbandman, the other a keeper of sheep. They both came at the appointed time to perform the religious homage due to Almighty God; the one with the produce of his field, the other of his fold. So far, there appears no difference between them. Was Cain and his offering, then, rejected because he was a wicked man? Such a conclusion would be hasty, and unwarranted by any thing as yet said in the account given us. On the contrary, though his offering was rejected, Cain himself was not yet a castaway from God's mercy; for we find the Almighty expostulating with him for being angry with his brother because his offering was accepted, and reminding him that there was yet time to retrieve his false step, and be reinstated in the privileges he was entitled to as the first-born—"And the Lord said unto Cain, why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be the excellency," (as it is in the margin of the Bible,) "and thou shalt rule over him." When, therefore, we rest satisfied that Cain's offering was rejected because he was a wicked man, we do not consider the passage with sufficient attention; but applying what happened subsequent-

ly, and we know not how long afterwards, in the murder of his brother, to what was previously, and in itself, deserving of the rejection it met with, we lose the deep instruction which, otherwise considered, this important passage of Scripture presents to us.

To the offering itself, then, we must look for the true cause of the rejection of the one and acceptance of the other. And to that plan of salvation which GOD in his infinite mercy provided before the world began, for fallen man, must we go for full satisfaction on this and on every point in religion. In this glorious plan the leading and most remarkable part is that which marks the unsearchable depth of the wisdom and love of GOD our Saviour in providing a substitute for the sinner, able and willing to bear the full infliction of divine justice, to suffer the penalty of the broken law, and, by the infinite merit of the atonement made, pay the ransom of immortal souls. In the fulfilment of this eternal purpose—"His purpose and grace given us in CHRIST JESUS before the world began"—was the gospel, the glad tidings of salvation, preached to Adam when driven from Paradise, in the promise "that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent" —that there should, in the fulness of time, be born of the posterity of Eve a Redeemer, or Deliverer, who, by making satisfaction for the sins of men, and restoring them to the love and favor of their offended Maker, should thereby bruise the head, destroy the power and dominion, of that old serpent the devil, who had beguiled our first parents into sin, and thereby brought ruin and death upon them and upon all their posterity. This is the ground-work of all religion, the only foundation on which either worship or offering can be presented to GOD on the part of man. And to keep alive in the world the knowledge of, and preserve a due regard to, this instituted means of mercy, GOD was pleased to direct, that in the religious worship henceforth to be paid him, the sacrifice of an animal, slain by the shedding of its blood, should form a conspicuous part; as an acknowledgment of guilt and forfeited life on the part of the worshipper; as a type of that sacrifice for sin, which in due time was to be offered up upon the cross; and for a continual remembrance that "without shedding of blood there is no remission."

The rite of sacrifice being thus established by divine authority, as an integral and essential part of religious worship and the instituted emblem of redemption by the blood of CHRIST, we now see what constituted the difference between the offerings of the two brothers, and the reason why one was accepted and the other not. We may now understand St. Paul's meaning, when he tells us in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "By faith Abel offered unto GOD a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, GOD testifying of his gifts." This it was, my brethren, that made the difference between his sacrifice and that of his brother—the one offered according to GOD's express appointment, with faith in a promised Redeemer, and from an humble hope of being accepted through his merits, while the other chose to be religious in his own way; for we can never suppose the one to be informed and the other ignorant of what GOD had appointed. By bringing of the fruit of the ground an offering to the LORD, Cain may be supposed to express his thankfulness for temporal mercies; but he showed no sense either of spiritual wants or of spiritual blessings. He felt not that he was a fallen sinner. He offered no living creature as an atonement for his sin, and whose blood was to be shed as an acknowledgment of the forfeiture of life, and as a type or figure of the all-atoning sacrifice of the Son of GOD. In short, he conducted himself in this solemn duty as if he had no sin to be atoned for, no need of a Mediator between GOD and his soul, no faith in what GOD had most solemnly enjoined. Whereas Abel, conscious of his fallen state and the now sinful condition of man, gladly resorted to the revealed means of mercy and grace, and offered a living creature to GOD of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof, as the instituted type or emblem of the Great First-born, through whose gracious intercession the life that had been forfeited was spared, and through whose saving grace alone, it could be restored to a blessed immortality.

Thus, my friends and hearers, does a little care and attention bestowed on the word of GOD lead us into the light of his dealings, all whose ways with his creatures are mercy and truth; while at the same time we are taught the most

useful and important of all lessons, that no otherwise than as GOD himself hath appointed and revealed to us in his word, can we perform any acceptable religious service; that religion in all its appointments is of divine institution, and in all its requirements has an end and a purpose in view, which it should be our most diligent study to understand and to follow. And thus may we see (what I pray GOD all present may see, and seeing, take the warning) in the persons of the two brothers, whose history is recorded for our admonition, the two opposite spirits which have ever since divided the world between them. In the one we see a lively representation of the devout and humble Christian, who, after all his most sincere and diligent endeavors to serve and please his Maker, yet conscious of his many sins and short-comings, of his entire unworthiness, in himself, of the reward of eternal life, relies solely on the merits of his crucified LORD for acceptance with GOD. In the other we have a no less faithful picture of that great multitude under the gospel, to whom the preaching of CHRIST crucified is foolishness—who will not have him to reign over them, and neglect altogether that method of atonement and acceptance through which only GOD hath declared he will be reconciled to sinners.

From this passage of Scripture we also learn, my brethren, the true nature of saving faith.

In Abel, we see it exemplified in such a belief of GOD's word as produced an exact and ready obedience to what was commanded, with a steadfast reliance on the truth of that promise, which, though he beheld it yet afar off, he nevertheless trusted would be fulfilled. And discerning, as he was taught, in the blood of the slain animal, that atoning blood which cleanseth from all sin, he "received the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul." And thus St. Paul sets him up as teaching to this day, and exemplifying the faith and obedience required of Christians; so that by it, by this one act, "he, being dead, yet speaketh."

While in Cain, the same knowledge of GOD, and of the worship prescribed to fallen man, which Abel was furnished with—the same need of the mercy shadowed out by the vicarious sacrifice of a slain animal, and promised to the faithful offerer—was made light of and perverted. He listened

to the whispers of that same deceiver who had already ruined his parents, and thereby made good a lodgement in every human heart—who no doubt assaulted him from this citadel of his power, with all the temptations which pride could muster up; that as he had not sinned after the similitude of his father's transgression, the condemnation could not, in justice, extend to him; that as he had not as yet broken any law imposed by the Almighty, why should he acknowledge himself guilty? And what connexion could the blood of bulls and of goats have with the state of his soul? Of what benefit could a Redeemer, whom he had never seen, and of whom he felt no want, or a salvation so distant and obscure, be to him? Surely if he stood as he was, and offered to the LORD his Creator the acknowledgments due for temporal blessings, no more could be required of him! Alas! my hearers, what proud and presumptuous reasonings does the enemy of souls prompt in the hearts of those "who receive not the love of the truth, that they may be saved!" And what an awful lesson is set us in this first unbeliever! How earnestly should deists and doubters of the divinity of JESUS CHRIST, and self-righteous moralists, ponder and meditate its weighty warning! His vain reasonings led Cain to worship GOD in a way of his own invention; his barren faith presented an unbidden offering; his presumptuous appearing before the LORD, without the appointed shield of the Redeemer's merits, exposed him to the vengeance of the broken law; a merciful call to repentance, from Him "who is not willing that any should perish," ("If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted?") being unheeded, hardened his proud unbelieving heart; envy, hatred, and malice took possession of his soul, and the bitter fruit was a brother's blood crying from the ground, while the righteous judgment of GOD drove the first-born of a race of sinners from all that was left of happiness here, and of hope hereafter, a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, an outcast from the face of GOD, a prey to all the horrors of guilt and despair. Sad but speaking emblem, my brethren, of that final casting away, "when the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and

brimstone; banished from the presence of the LORD and the glory of his power with an everlasting destruction."

Fruitful in instruction as this portion of GOD's most holy word is to all descriptions of persons, and full of warning to those who in any manner make light of the gospel, or on any pretence neglect the ordinances of GOD's appointment; it is still more so to those, who, led astray by their own conceit, venture to devise a mode of their own, in which they choose to worship GOD, "going in the way of Cain," as St. Jude expresses it. Here such might learn, not only the great danger they encounter of having their unbidden offering rejected, but the still greater risk of being given over to the delusions of the devil, to blind and mislead them, under a semblance of religion, to utter ruin and everlasting misery; while to the believer, to the humble Christian, whose "faith stands, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of GOD," applied through the written word—who is content to take his religion from the Bible, and to be saved as GOD hath appointed—it is "a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path." From the issue of this first attempt to worship GOD after a way that is not good, because in opposition to one that is prescribed and commanded; and from the many other instances of a like kind, recorded in the history of the Old Testament Church; the believer learns his first and most useful lesson in this fundamental truth—that in all that relates to salvation "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of GOD that showeth mercy." That, as religion hath nothing human in its contrivance, so neither is it for human wisdom to alter or amend its salutary institutions. Under every dispensation of GOD's mercy to sinners, he perceives the object, the end, and the means, to be the same. He therefore diligently applies himself to the revealed word, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual;" and tracing throughout the whole legal economy the purpose to which it pointed—the end it was to answer—he thankfully embraces that light which the law and the gospel shed upon each other; he comprehends more fully the nature of "that liberty wherewith CHRIST hath set" his disciples "free;" and, careful not to "use his liberty for an occasion to the flesh," he cleaves to CHRIST in those ordinances which CHRIST himself hath appointed—in the use

and observance of which only, can he either expect or obtain the favor of GOD. Finding, therefore, in the Church, ministry, and sacraments of the gospel, the same instituted means of grace which from the beginning have pointed to CHRIST, as the great sin-offering of the law—the substance of all its types and shadows—"the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth"—"the Great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us, and is able to save them, to the uttermost, that come unto GOD by him"—his faith is strengthened, his hope increased, his charity enlarged; he sees that the promise has never failed, he can therefore trust it for all that is to come, "committing the keeping of his soul to GOD, in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." Thus is JESUS CHRIST, to him, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." "In the LORD only hath he righteousness and strength," and finds "the gospel the power of GOD unto salvation."

In the case of unhappy Cain, he is warned against giving heed to seducing spirits, however plausibly their reasonings may be put together, or however flattering they may be to the pride of his fallen nature. He remembers there is an enemy within, on the watch to deceive him, who can even transform himself into an angel of light. He therefore learns to distrust and deny himself. He therefore tries the spirits by the word of GOD—"to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

By the example of Abel, he learns with what temper and disposition of soul to appear before GOD; with what offerings to come into his courts; in whose name to offer up his prayers and praises; and through whom alone to expect an answer of peace. Discerning by faith "the Lamb of GOD, which taketh away the sins of the world," his offering is sanctified by the merits of CHRIST. GOD hath respect unto it, and *he* also obtains the witness that he pleases GOD. Thus "setting to his seal that GOD is true," he "worships him in the SPIRIT, rejoices in CHRIST JESUS," and "has no confidence in the flesh," patiently expecting that joyful hour when he shall "join the general assembly and Church of the First-born, in singing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb; ascribing bless-

ing, and honor, and glory, and power, unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever."

Peculiarly applicable and instructive, my brethren, is this passage of Scripture, with reference to the more particular purpose for which we are this day met together. We, too, are come up to present an offering to the LORD. Let us, therefore, take heed to the warning given us, lest, coming empty, we go away unfilled; lest, offering an unbidden sacrifice, we draw down upon ourselves the anger of the LORD, provoking him to take away his HOLY SPIRIT from us, and deliver us over, like Cain, to the devices and desires of our own sinful hearts, to the snares and delusions of the enemy of our souls.

Furnished, as we are, with the clear discoveries of the gospel, with the substance to which all the types and shadows of the law pointed; having our faith confirmed, and our hope exalted, by the coming of the promised seed; GOD having "provided" and furnished us with "a Lamb for a burnt-offering" in the body of CHRIST, once offered to bear the sins of many, and having called us to be partakers of the benefits of this unbloody sacrifice; let us bear in mind wherefore CHRIST hath thus suffered for us, and what we are pledged to by thus confessing him before men as our only hope and means of salvation. Let us look to those who have gone before us, whom GOD hath set forth as examples of that faith and patience which inherited the promises; who, though they saw them only afar off, "yet were persuaded of them and embraced them, confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." The flaming altar and the bleeding victim are no more indeed required from us; but the same sense of guilt and danger, the same need of an Almighty Saviour, the same reliance on the atoning merits of the blood of CHRIST, the same faith in his will and power to save, the same obedience to and observance of the duties enjoined, which were manifested by them, must now accompany our offering, that GOD may have respect to us and to it. Thus shall we rightly discern the LORD's body broken for our sinful bodies, apply his shed blood to the cleansing of our polluted souls, and reap the fruit of pardon and peace—the increase of faith, hope, and charity. For the Christian sa-

crifice of the body and blood of CHRIST offered up in this sacrament, is to every worthy communicant the pledge of GOD's mercy through the satisfaction of CHRIST's death, relied upon for the pardon of repented sin, and also a means of grace for renewed spiritual strength. It is the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. For, as that cried unto GOD from the ground for vengeance on the murderer, this crieth continually unto GOD for mercy on the sinner who flees to it for refuge. Let us, then, my brethren in the LORD, lift the eye of faith to him who, "by his one oblation of himself once offered upon the cross, made there a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world;" and, laying upon the altar of our hearts the Lamb without blemish and without spot, let us approach this solemn commemoration of our LORD, in the humble confidence that with such sacrifices GOD is well pleased; entreating him, for the love of his dear Son, to "forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances, and to endue us with the grace of his HOLY SPIRIT, to amend our lives according to his holy word;" beseeching that merciful and compassionate Saviour, who hath redeemed us "from the power of the grave," to redeem us "from all iniquity," to "grant us in this world the saving knowledge of his truth, and in the world to come life everlasting."

A few words by way of application, will impress upon all your hearts, I trust, the infinite importance of a diligent and careful attention to GOD's holy word.

In that word it is written of Abel that, "he being dead yet speaketh." May not the same be said of Cain, my friends? Abel speaketh by example of faith and obedience; Cain by example of unbelief and rebellion. And, alas! are not multitudes directly interested in the solemn warning given them in his miserable fate, seeing they stand in the same danger? How many, (I speak of those under the gospel,) how many, more perverse even than he, make no acknowledgment whatever of GOD as the Almighty Creator and Ruler of the universe, by any mode of worship either public or private? What multitudes among us make no account of the mercies revealed in the gospel, of the salvation it offers? In this Christian assembly, what a small proportion entertain even

an outward regard for the unspeakable interests of their immortal souls. How numerous are they who, though they know the truth, yet love it not; though they hear the warning, yet heed it not; but go off, one to his farm and another to his merchandise—this to his profession and that to his pleasures. Yea, what numbers, even in the professing world, skim over the word of life, and take only what suits their indolence or their convenience, setting their own careless thought in opposition to the clearest declarations of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, and, forsaking the fountain of living waters, hew out for themselves cisterns of salvation—but, alas! they are "broken cisterns which can hold no water"—building on the sand, and with untempered mortar, a wall of defence for their souls—part Scriptural, and part the invention of man. Oh! that they would, all of them, carefully consider and meditate upon this fruitful passage of Scripture, this double warning of God's word, teaching by example as well as by precept, and weigh well the dreadful consequences which followed this first departure from God in his appointed worship; that they would understand that Cain became not envious and a murderer until, in the pride of his heart, he thought himself wiser than God, and sufficient to prescribe a mode of worship for himself—a self-righteous intrusion into God's almighty prerogative of appointing the conditions and the means of salvation for sinners; that even then he was not given over to a reprobate mind, until he had slighted an expostulation on his folly, and a call to repentance! O, bethink you, my careless hearers, how often God hath expostulated with you by his ministers, by his word, and his Spirit; and learn to fear, that though he is long-suffering, he "will in no wise let you go." Oh! that those who slight altogether the duties of religion, and live without God in the world, would hear the deep exclamation of one of Cain's descendants, and with him lay to heart, that "if Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly shall" such "be avenged seventy and seven fold!" Oh! that those who pretend to believe the gospel, and yet slight the means and mercies it presents—who talk of the merits of Christ, and yet are strangers to the appointments of Christ, would now learn, that a Christian hope is only given to a Christian

life; that the hope of the hypocrite is like the spider's web, "like the chaff which the wind scattereth away from over the face of the earth." Oh! that the professing world would from hence learn, that though "there is a way that seemeth right unto a man," yet "the ends thereof are the ways of death"—that "not every one that saith unto CHRIST, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he only that doeth the will of GOD," as revealed in his word and enjoined in his most holy worship. And Oh! that we may all search deeper, see clearer, and live holier; that GOD may have respect unto us and unto our offerings of worship and praise; that he may guide our feet into the way of life, and bring us to his everlasting rest, with righteous Abel, and all the blessed company of heaven, to glorify his matchless grace to us ward in CHRIST JESUS, world without end. AMEN.

SERMON XL.

THE STATE OF THE DEPARTED.—A FUNERAL DISCOURSE.

Job xiv. 14.

If a man die, shall he live again?

Did the inquiry contained in my text embrace only a common interest, little need would there be, my brethren and hearers, to put to you a question, which all present are competent to answer. Did the death of our friends and relations involve in it the gloomy and comfortless thought of extinguished being, small reason could there be, for assembling together on such melancholy occasions; and still smaller the expectation, that from so common, so inevitable, and so frequently recurring a circumstance, any thing of hope or comfort, of warning and instruction, could be drawn. They who are bereaved by death of an object of affection and regard—the mourning husband—the disconsolate wife—the afflicted father—the weeping mother—the helpless orphan and distressed friend—might be left to grieve alone, over blasted hopes and blighted expectations, seeing no consolation could be offered, no comfort derived, no instruction received, of a higher grade than would be equally applicable to the beasts that perish.

But when the answer to my text, which by the gospel we are all enabled to give, leads us beyond the grave, to the confines of an eternal world, where death shall no more be the object either of hope or fear, when the grave of a fellow creature utters its uniform warning to those who are expectants of the same appointed end; the purpose for which we are met together assumes its proper character; the sympathies of our common nature expand to the sorrows of our kind; the warning presented to us strikes on our own personal concern; and the softened heart learns to realize the deep and solemn truth "that it is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting."

Shall we then live again, my brethren? Shall another state of being bring us once more together, to enjoy or suffer? These are questions which involve whatever can awaken the attention and engage the feelings of mortal, but intelligent creatures; and, as such, form a suitable subject for our present meditations. To the deceased, these questions are already resolved. She now knows, intimately, the unspeakable things of the separate state. To her, faith is lost in sight; and we trust, through the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, hope has ended in enjoyment. But to those she has left behind—they are yet suspended on the daily shortening limit of an uncertain existence. And were she permitted to speak to you, she would now unite with me, in pressing upon those who were dear to her in this life, and upon all present, the infinite consequences which flash upon the mind, from this short, but anxious and impressive passage of Scripture. We know that we live, my hearers. Apprehension and experience teach us, that we have to die. What more important inquiry, then, can engage our attention, than, with this speaking and afflictive proof of our common mortality before us, to look into the grave of the wife torn from her husband—the mother from her children—the child from her parent—the relation from her kindred, and ask ourselves the concerning question —"If a man die, shall he live again?"

To press this meditation upon you, my friends, and to assist you in making it profitable, I shall, in the

First place, consider the proofs we are furnished with, of another state of being.

Secondly, the nature of that future state.

Thirdly, the preparation required for it; and then,

Conclude, with an application of the subject.

"If a man die, shall he live again?"

I. First, I am to consider the proofs we are furnished with, that another state of being awaits us after death.

Now these proofs are derived from the nature of the soul; from the present condition of the world; and, above all, from the revelation of Jesus Christ.

That rational creatures are compounded of two distinct substances, a material body, and an immaterial spirit, is the experience of every creature thus rational. And the first

exertion of thought or reason, the first sensation of hope or fear, the first emotion of joy or grief, did we endeavor to know ourselves as we ought to do, would convince us that we are thus compounded. For when we think or reason, love or hate, hope or fear, rejoice or grieve, it is plain that it is not the body which performs these acts. Neither our limbs, nor our trunk, nor our head, nor our heart, is what thinks and reasons, wills and refuses, likes and dislikes, grieves and rejoices; but something separate from the body, of another nature, that hath its abode within it, though unseen and intangible.

This, perhaps, will be plainer to your apprehension, if you consider that the body may be mutilated, and deprived of all its inferior members, yea, may lose all sense of feeling, and power of motion, as in the case of a general palsy, while the immaterial spirit retains its faculties entire. On the other hand, the mind or thinking faculty may be entirely useless, while the body is in perfect repair, as in the case of idiots and deranged persons. Very various, indeed, are the degrees, in which the soul and the body act mutually upon each other, and are powerfully affected the one by the other. But while this is conclusive for their intimate union, it is not so for their identity. Indeed the distinction between them, and the superiority of spirit over matter—its capacity to exist, and perform its functions, when the body is altogether useless—is so plain and obvious, that it admits the fair presumption, and affords a good reason for concluding, that it survives the dissolution of the body. The nature of the soul, also, confirms this conclusion. That which perceives and wills, cannot be composed of parts. Being uncompounded, therefore, it cannot be dissolved; and in our meaning of the word death, it cannot die. The objects it is conversant with, also; the extent to which it can soar in things abstracted from matter; the speculations with which it is familiar, when the body does not clog and weigh it down; its wonderful range into things spiritual and heavenly, unmixed and eternal; all these demonstrate a class of being, distinct from any necessary dependence on animal life. The body is an instrument, prepared for and adapted to the soul; something joined to it for a time; and though the connexion is very close, while

they subsist together, yet every thing we can observe confirms the conclusion, that when the body perishes, we do not, therefore, cease to be; and as the soul is the seat of consciousness, we may as really exist after its separation from the body by the stroke of death, as before. The body gives personality to the soul, but is not essential to the exercise of its peculiar faculties, nor yet to the enjoyments and sufferings of which it is capable in its own nature.

Such are some of the arguments which serve to demonstrate the distinct and independent existence of the soul of man; and though not needed by those who have the benefit of revelation, are, nevertheless, of importance to convince gainsayers, by showing the agreement of revelation and reason, and thereby endearing to us that blessed light which shines upon our darkness, takes our shallow reason by the hand, and guides it through all the wonders of God's rich redeeming love, to the infallible certainty of that state of future being, to which we are all hastening as speedily as the flight of time can carry us forward.

The proof of another state of being, from the present state of the world, is equally conclusive.

As we are all the creatures of the same God, were we designed for the present life only, an equality of condition in this world would seem to be the result of the disposal of us by an almighty, wise, and just Being. But this is demonstrably not the case, either in the original qualifications of our minds, or in the constitution of our bodies, or in the circumstances (over which we have no control) under which we come into life, or in the duration of our existence. If, to obviate this difficulty, we assume, that the visible inequality of condition among mankind is the consequence of retribution for good or evil conduct, this conduct must have been previous to the present life, which involves the absurdity of a pre-existent state of which we have no consciousness, and under any circumstances would require that prosperity and adversity, enjoyment and suffering, under the direction of a perfectly just Being, should be in exact proportion to individual desert. But as this is evidently not the method of that government under which we are found, it follows, that

there must be a future state, in which all that appears unequal in this life will be exactly recompensed.

From this conclusion there is no escape, but in the denial of God, as the righteous governor of the universe—no retreat, but to the gloomy caverns of atheism, or to the grave, as the impregnable prison-house of both body and soul for ever. Indeed, so plain and obvious is this conclusion to the natural apprehensions of all men, that even the Heathen world acknowledge it, and were, and are, in no small degree, regulated by it. Nor is there that being, or race of beings, on the face of this earth, however low and unenlightened, who are not, to some extent, under the influence of this universal impression. I do not, however, say that all have equally just views of a future state, or are influenced in their conduct by the only conceivable purpose of such an appointment of the wisdom and goodness of Almighty God. Sad and gross are the perversions of this truth, though deepest engraved on the heart of man; but it exists and is acknowledged wherever a descendant of Adam can be found. Nor do I say that there never was an atheist—though I doubt it. Many have professed themselves such—betrayed by the affectation of superior wisdom, or by the pride of singularity, to speak against their conscience at the beginning, and to persist in it against the demonstration of God's power and providence in the government of the universe, until he is provoked to give them up to strong delusion, even to believing their own lie; as is the case, in like manner, with those who neglect or scoff at revealed religion, from the vain imagination that it marks them as persons of superior discernment. Such commonly go on, resisting the better sense of their own minds, and the reproofs of the Holy Spirit, until they become seared, as it were, with a red-hot iron—callous and impenetrable to every thing but the near approach of death, which fearfully convinces them, but too late, that they have bartered away their souls for the vanity of a name which is about to be extinguished for ever. Beware, my dear young friends, of this cruel vanity, and remember that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

But, whatever may be thought of the arguments for a future state from the nature of the soul, and the present une-

qual distribution of good and evil in the world, the page of revelation has removed all difficulty and doubt from us, my hearers, to whom "life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel." Whatever was probable from the nature of the soul; whatever appeared reasonable from the existing condition of the world; what reason approves and conscience affirms; is now put beyond dispute, by the resurrection of CHRIST from the dead. And however dark and obscure the intimations of a future state and of a righteous judgment, given before the coming of CHRIST, may appear to us, yet certain it is, that on this basis every dispensation of religion which GOD has vouchsafed to the world, has been founded; and in all ages, whosoever feared GOD and wrought righteousness, did it upon the sure foundation, "that GOD is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" and that, if not in this life, yet in that which is to come, "he will render unto every man according as his work shall be."

Upon this unshaken principle of truth and justice, Job was enabled to bear up under the severe trial to which it pleased GOD to subject him; upon this ground he was able to answer his own question, and to find, in the answer, the only rational argument for patience and submission under the afflictions and privations of the present life—"If a man die, shall he live again?" Yes, he shall live again; therefore, says Job in this chapter, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands." Upon no other principle, my friends, has religion any claim to our regard; for religion is only another word to express preparation for another state of being. Defeat or lose sight of this primary truth, and the world becomes a dark and dreary prison-house, without a single ray of light or comfort under its unavoidable miseries—a huge golgotha of carnage, for Death to revel in. Without a reward for the righteous, retribution to the wicked, good and evil in human actions are mere arbitrary denominations. But upon the reasonable and revealed foundation of a future state of rewards and punishments, faith can put forth its mighty energies; hope can invigorate resolution; charity can exert its unfailing influence;

patience can have her perfect work; and submission to the will of God be crowned with an everlasting recompense.

Thus have I showed you the grounds and reasons on which the doctrine of a future state is most surely believed among us; and thus are we all left without excuse, my hearers, if the clear and concurring testimony of reason and revelation fails so to convince us of this fundamental truth, as to bring our lives under its constant influence. To believe this doctrine, and to act accordingly, is to dig deep, and to build upon the rock which cannot be moved; while to neglect it, or to entertain it in the mind as a matter of mere speculation, is to build upon the sand—upon what will give way and deceive, and leave us without support, not only under the afflictions of time, but in that great and dreadful day "when the heavens shall flee away with a great noise; the earth, also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up; and the dead, small and great, shall stand before God, to receive according to the deeds done in the body."

II. Secondly, I am to consider the nature of that future state.

That it must be altogether different from that in which we, at present, subsist, we are in some degree prepared to apprehend, from the separation which takes place at death betwixt the soul and the body, when "the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." But what becomes of the spiritual part of our frame—where, and in what condition it exists—can only be known from what God hath discovered to us in his word, of the invisible state of departed spirits. From revelation, then, we learn that the state of death consists of two stages of existence; one between death and the resurrection of the body, the other after the judgment of the great day.

The first is called the separate state, because the soul is disjoined from the body. It is distinguished in the Scriptures by the name *Hades;* and is the place into which our blessed Lord's spirit went, during the three days his body lay in the grave. Of this separate state, the Scriptures inform us there are two distinct conditions—that of the righteous and that of the wicked; in which they severally await the righteous

judgment of God, with a consciousness and foretaste of what that will be.

That the state of the soul after death is not a state of insensibility, as some have held, is plainly set forth to us in many passages of holy writ; as also, that it is a state of consciousness, and happy or otherwise according as that consciousness is affected by the tenor of the past life. Thus in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the latter is represented as carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, and comforted there; but the former awoke "in hell, being in torments"—that is in *Hades*, or the separate state, with a foretaste of the misery he had brought upon himself, by his sensual, sinful life. For to suppose, as many too hastily do, that he was in the state of the damned—because the word hell is now so applied—is contrary to the whole warrant of Scripture, which uniformly represents the place of eternal punishment as subsequent to the general judgment, and consequent on the righteous sentence then to be pronounced.

Thus, also, in our Saviour's promise to the penitent thief —"verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," the proper meaning is, that his soul should accompany that of the Saviour to that division of Hades appropriated to the righteous. St. Paul, likewise, who was caught up into the third heaven long before he died, and, being an eye witness, must be considered good authority, had such a clear view of the happiness of the separate state to the souls of the righteous, that he was filled with the "desire to depart, and be with Christ."

St. John, also, in the view which he had of the invisible world, represents the separate state as one of consciousness and activity. "I saw under the altar," says he, "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them, and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." And St. Jude informs us, that even the devils themselves are not yet con-

signed to the place of eternal torment. For, says he, "the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day."

Carelessly, then, do we express ourselves, my hearers, when we say that death consigns us at once to heaven or to hell. It indeed determines what our ultimate condition shall be, for the separate state has no provision for repentance and amendment, annexed to it. The present life is to every man that portion of his being, by which eternity will be determined. As the tree falls, so it lies. As the grave receives us, such will judgment find us. For it is on account of that judgment, and to bring us together to receive its sentence, that the body is kept in the grave, and the soul in the separate state, until all be fulfilled which relates to this world. Then shall that capital doctrine of our faith, the resurrection of the body, be realized; that soul and body, once more united, may appear at the judgment seat of CHRIST, to answer for their joint conduct in this life, and according thereto to be jointly happy or miserable for ever. To that end, the body will be fitted for its immortal destiny, being raised incorruptible, no more capable of change or decay.

Such is the nature of that future state, to which we are all fast hastening, my dear hearers, and upon which our departed friend has already entered. In her, no further change can take place, until, once more united to the body in which we knew, we shall again know her, and stand together before our Judge. O how full of interest is such a thought, my brethren! How full of comfort in the loss of dear friends! How is the bitterness of separation sweetened, and death itself converted into a friend, whose welcome stroke shall restore us to all we loved in this poor world, and place us beyond the reach of change or separation, in the presence of GOD, "where is fulness of joy, at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore!" Well may we exclaim, my brethren, "what hath GOD wrought!" Well may the believer exult over the grave, and ask, "O Death, where is" now "thy sting? O Grave, where is" now "thy victory?" Thou mayest, indeed, triumph over us for a season, and wring our hearts with anguish, under thy relentless strokes; "but thanks be to

God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

But it is to the believer only, remember, my dear friends, that this blessed and glorious hope is given. All, indeed, shall be raised; but it is only "those who sleep in Jesus," that "he will bring with him," when he comes to judge the world. All shall be raised incorruptible, that is, incapable of any more change or decay of their bodies; but it is the faithful disciples of Christ only, who shall be "changed into the likeness of his glorious body," while the fearful and unbelieving, the impenitent and ungodly, shall be "driven from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, with an everlasting destruction. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear;" especially, let the gospel sinner, who is dreaming through his day of grace, intent only on the things which perish—who thinks not of the account he has to give to God for the mercies of redemption, and the means of salvation through a crucified Saviour—nor of death, nor of judgment, nor of heaven, nor of hell, but only of the world, and its vain delights—O let him stop before iniquity prove his everlasting ruin; and, as we shall surely "live again," let him treasure up the warning now given, and instantly set himself, with heart and hand, to prepare for that tremendous change which death makes in the condition of accountable beings.

III. Of which preparation I am now, in the third place, to speak.

However complicated the process may be, from the variety in moral condition among mankind, the preparation itself consists but of two points, viz: Victory over sin, and the renewal of our souls to that holiness in which the image of God consists; for both which, God, in his infinite mercy, hath provided, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

As sin originally banished us from God, it must, if persisted in, continue to exclude us from all hope of his favor and presence—for he is the unchangeable God—and deliver us over to eternal death as its only wages. Hence the necessity on the part of man, a sinner, that the guilt of sin should be pardoned, and the love and the practice of sin be destroyed, if he would obtain eternal life. And hence the unspeakable value of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, re-

vealed in the gospel; by whose sufferings and death in our behalf, alone, can these mighty benefits be obtained. For it is not sufficient, my hearers, that we have power over the outward acts of sin—in other words, that we be moral in our lives—to prepare us for the presence of GOD, in eternal glory. The corruption of our nature must be removed; the desires and affections of our hearts must be changed; and the fallen powers of the soul renovated, to the apprehension and entertainment of spiritual and heavenly things. And to prepare us for the employment and occupation of inhabitants of heaven, we must acquire a relish, in the present life, for the worship of GOD; we must learn the language of praise, and the practice of righteousness; and must find delight in contemplating and imitating his glorious perfections, and excellent goodness. This, my hearers, is indispensable to prepare us for the blessed society of heaven. But it is not the work of any human power. It is the work of the HOLY GHOST, to sanctify the sinner to GOD, and fit him for eternal glory. Yet, as we are moral beings, and only as such accountable, it is a work in which we have to bear a part; and our part is, to hear the word of GOD and to keep it; to believe his gracious promises made to us in CHRIST our Saviour; to restrain the outward acts of sin and disobedience to his holy laws; to cultivate communion with him by prayer and meditation; and to surrender ourselves to the blessed guidance of his word and HOLY SPIRIT, working in us, whereby he renews our hearts, sanctifies our fallen nature, and prepares us, through the merits and death of his only begotten Son, to inherit eternal life in his everlasting kingdom of never-ending felicity and unfading glory.

In this mighty work, behold, my dear friends, of how little value this deluding world is. Alas! all its wisdom, wealth, and power, can aid us nothing in the transformation of our souls from sin to holiness. O let it break its hold upon our hearts, thus to see, that in the work of our salvation it is not our friend, but our enemy! that its glory and its pleasures are as nothing, to the glory that shall be revealed to the righteous—to the unfading pleasures which await the faithful, at the right hand of GOD! That its reproach and its frown—yea, all that it can inflict—is as nothing to the loss

of God's everlasting favor! That the combined purchase of its wealth cannot give to God a ransom for a single soul, or redeem our dearest friend from the grave! Oh! could wealth bring those dear ones back, over whose loss the bitter tear now falls, think you it would not be poured out, even to nakedness? Yes, indeed! But it will not do—we shall go to them, but they shall not return to us, till the heavens be no more.

As we are to live again, then, my hearers, let it move us to choose that good part, which shall not be taken from us, but shall endure and remain, when time shall cease to travel. And let it stir us up to diligence, to consider how fast our time is slipping away; how much we have already lost; how little may remain; and how great a work it is to change the temper of the soul, to break the power of sin, and acquire the qualifications of an inhabitant of heaven. My hearers! it requires no effort to go to hell. It is a plain road, and we all are disposed by nature to walk in it. But to get to heaven, is a strait and a narrow way, which nothing but divine grace can enable us to find, and strengthen us to persevere in.

To that grace, then, let us all turn with earnestness, assured by the promise of God, that "if we ask we shall receive, if we seek we shall find." To remain careless and unconcerned for the awful alternative under which we draw our hourly breath; to risk the uncertainty of our frail existence, without preparation for death and eternity; to meet hereafter, loaded, not only with our sins, but the refusal of offered salvation, through faith in a crucified Saviour; disregarding the reason of our minds, despising the open warnings of the ministers of Christ, and stifling the good motions of God's Holy Spirit, stirring in our hearts: surely this is not the course which rational creatures should pursue—who know that they are to live again, and that their future life must be happy or miserable, according to the improvement or abuse of that which now is.

I come now, to conclude, with a short application of what has been said.

Solemnities of this kind, my brethren, as they bring our thoughts to bear and our feelings to act upon the common end of our being, are justified by the profitable use which

may be made of them. Who that sees this flourishing family surrendered to grief, and shrouded in mourning, but must realize the affecting truth, that they also, in their turn, shall become the occasion of mourning to their friends, or undergo the anguish of separation from what is dear and valued? But, alas! for man—poor, fallen, dying man! how ingenious and ready to apply the warning to others, and reject it for himself! How prone to let slip the good impressions of a serious hour, and put off till to-morrow, the convictions of to-day! But to-morrow—and to-morrow—and to-morrow—a few more or less, my friends, will usher in the morning of eternity; when neglected warnings, rejected opportunities, and abused mercies, shall press upon the conscience of the gospel sinner, with a mountain load of anguish and despair.

And is it so, my fellow-sinner? Does something now whisper to thy heart, that that day awaits thee, with all its unspeakable consequences unprovided for? If this be so, O turn not away from the friendly monitor, but let this day be the acceptable time to flee to the cross of Christ for life and salvation! Consider how uncertain thy life is, at the best; that though thou mayest live many years, yet they must come to an end, and the narrow prison of the grave close upon years, and honors, and enjoyments; that nothing but the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, revealed in the gospel, can remove from man the heavy curse of living a little while here, in sorrow, suffering, and disappointment, to perish eternally hereafter; and learn to bless God for the mercies of redemption, and for the glorious hope assured by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Pause a moment, then, on the border of the narrow house, appointed for all that live, and ask thyself, my fellow-traveller to another world, on what thy hopes are founded, when this dream of life shall be changed for the realities of eternity? Ask the surviving connexions of the deceased, on what are founded their hopes for her, and for themselves, and they will tell you—yes! this day of their calamity will open their hearts to feel and to say—that they are founded only on the mercy purchased and revealed to their faith by the Lord Jesus Christ; in the humble and joyful expectation whereof, they commit her body to the earth, and her soul to Him who bought her with

His own blood. They will tell you, that those hopes are derived from the life and immortality brought to light by the gospel, in the steadfast faith whereof, they trust she lived and died, and which, through divine mercy, they hope to inherit with her, in that everlasting kingdom of unmixed happiness—where "GOD shall wipe all tears from their eyes, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

Oh! how vain and trifling are all the promises of time compared with this eternal recompense! And how strong the obligations to a religious life from the sacred ties of family affection! If husbands and wives, if parents and children, if brothers and sisters, if near relations and dear friends, would secure the enjoyment of those holy connexions in their purest and highest degree, they must look beyond the present life. In the presence of GOD only shall be the full fruition of happiness. And Oh! how blessed the hope to those who are left behind, when, as in the present case, that hope is encouraged by the religious condition of the friend who hath left us! Sorrow not, then, you her husband, her children, and friends, as those who have no hope! GOD lent her for a season to those to whom she was so dear, and to set an example of faith and charity to all around her; but her meek and humble spirit was too timid and gentle for this rough world. He, therefore, took her to himself—to the pure and peaceful repose and security of the just in the separate state. By his grace he called her to number her days, and prepare for the great account. She was made willing and obedient in the day of his power, and is now gone to her Saviour in whom she trusted.

Would you, then, join her in that state of pure and peaceful expectation of yet better things, to which, we trust, she has passed? Would you escape the misery of eternal separation from one so dear and so valued, and from GOD the only good? Learn to view the present life in its true colors; learn to use it as the uncertain period in which eternal life must be won or lost; learn to "fear GOD and to keep his commandments." Thus shall you meet again in the heavenly Jerusalem, a rejoicing family made eternally happy in the enjoyment of GOD. Think, then, that you hear her calling to you,

My dear husband, my dear children, my kind friends, disappoint not this holy hope, but "press towards the mark for the prize of your high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS" Then shall we indeed live again, and sorrow and separation be known no more.*

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* To this sermon the following letter was found appended:

WILLIAMSBOROUGH, MAY 17, 1828.

MY WORTHY FRIEND:

In transcribing this sermon for you, which I have done very cheerfully, my earnest wish is, that it may be made profitable to your soul by the blessing of GOD.

The inquiry which it presents to the mind, is of the most concerning description, lying at the very threshold of religion, and rendering it a reasonable service, or a piece of mummery, according as the question is answered.

Few will answer it otherwise than in the affirmative; perhaps none, if they answer sincerely. But fewer still, it is to be feared, will do more than give their assent to it as a truth; neglecting to make that personal application of it to themselves which makes the truth effective. Against this, permit me to caution you, as I thought I perceived a disposition, rather to speculate on religious subjects, than to act upon them. I mean, that they exercise your thoughts as important subjects, but are not apprehended in their personal application to yourself as ground of immediate action. But, surely the veracity of Almighty GOD is sufficient for any man to found the duty of belief and obedience upon, and at our time of life (to-day I enter my 57th year) there is none to throw away upon speculation.

"Ye believe in GOD, believe also in me," says our blessed LORD. And he here spoke what every man who considers what GOD is in his perfections, and what man is in his imperfections, will be brought to the desire of, viz: the interposition of some suitable medium of connexion and intercourse between beings so infinitely removed from each other, as a pure and holy GOD, and a corrupt and sinful creature. This provision of the wisdom and love of GOD is what alone makes the contemplation of a future state bearable to us. Without such a Saviour as is given to our necessities, it is terrible to think of another life. Annihilation would be far preferable; there being no reasonable hope to man as he is, from GOD as he is, without a mediator equal to the requirements of the parties at variance.

This being so in the judgment of sound and sober reason, and confirmed by direct revelation, our part is clear; which is, to receive this truth, and to act upon it, working for life in the obedience of faith, and renouncing works as grounds of desert, relying on the merit and righteousness of the Redeemer as the safe ground of acceptance, and the only ground on which an imperfect and sinful creature, in his best duties, can entertain hope towards GOD.

May he direct your heart and life to CHRIST, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption!

Your affectionate friend,
JOHN S. RAVENSCROFT.

SERMON XLI.

GOD IS WITNESS.

1 THESSALONIANS ii. 5, *last clause.*

GOD is witness.

In meditating on the Christian system, my brethren and hearers, it is very wonderful to perceive how exactly it is fitted to the nature and actual condition of that creature, for whose advantage it is constructed, and for whose benefit it is revealed. So striking is this, that I have not the least doubt, were Christianity presented to us as a branch of natural science only, this peculiar feature would have drawn from the philosophers of every age that praise and admiration—that earnest inculcation of the wisdom of its precepts—and that strong and united testimony in favor of its real influence on individual and general happiness—which is too often denied, or coldly and carelessly afforded, by the same persons when they view it as a divine revelation, and a law obligatory for life or death eternal, on every soul of man within the compass of its joyful sound. Strange that the wisdom of the world should be so averse to the wisdom of GOD, and that the very name of religion should take from truth and wisdom their highest character, and render them unpleasant and unpalatable to the hearts of men! Yet so it is—men who respect natural verities, and act with care and caution according to their results in the affairs of this life, feel disposed to resent and resist them when proposed and pressed as religious truth.

Of this melancholy fact, the proof is, alas! too easy; and, in the meditations which arise from my text, presents one trait of human character in connexion with the application of the Christian system to the nature of man, from which we may all derive profitable instruction.

We must all be aware, my hearers, of the influence which the regulations of society have upon our conduct—that we

are disposed to act with care and propriety, according to the number and quality of those who are spectators of our conduct. And, to whatever it may be attributed, certain it is, that society is indebted to this principle for much of the decorum and decency of its enjoyments—for a very powerful restraint upon the vicious propensities of the dissolute and profligate.

We may not all be aware, however, that among the many springs and motives to human conduct, to which the arguments and exhortation of the gospel are addressed, this should be one. It is, nevertheless, the case; so that even the feeling of self-respect is interested in behalf of our souls, and made conducive to the interests of eternity; and the man who can control and keep under a habit of profaneness or intemperance, while under the eye of those whom he respects, or whose respect would be lessened by the indulgence of the habit, has only to consider, that he is continually under a higher inspection than that of the highest of his fellow creatures, to learn, at one and the same instant, the control he has over his own actions, and the obligation he is under to exert it. For if either the fear or the favor of man can restrain the drunkard from his beastly propensity, or keep a watch upon the lips of the profane swearer, even for a season; if there are companies of their fellow creatures in whose presence they could not be tempted to transgress; how much more shall a sense of the omnipotence of GOD, entertained and realized, operate to produce watchfulness and self-denial! Very unjustifiable, therefore, is the common excuse made for the profane and the dissolute, that it is a habit so fixed that they cannot control it; because, if they can control the outward act for an hour or for an evening, the same self-command may be exerted for a day, for a year, for a life time. Hence the great danger of loose associates—of the company of persons who do not render it necessary, by their respectability, that we feel some respect for ourselves, and that we exert that respect, to retain some share of it from others. "Evil communications corrupt good manners," not only by the direct contagion of vice, but by the indirect and equally fatal influence of an example from which restraint is removed.

While, however, the gospel appeals to every principle and

to every motive which can operate upon rational natures, and thereby manifests what a reasonable service it is; it is, still, in subordination to those higher motives which flow from the attributes of Almighty GOD, and the obligations of redeemed man. These include the only safe foundation for either theory or practice in moral duty, and are set forth, in their whole extent, in the words of my text.

"GOD is witness."

It is a very solemn thought, my hearers, and very full of interest to accountable beings—GOD is, at this moment, witness betwixt you and me, and betwixt you and himself, in the appropriate business of this day. He is a faithful and true witness, and will make an unerring record of my faithfulness in declaring to you the counsel of his wisdom and love, for your salvation. He is witness to the springs and motives by which I am actuated, and knows the end I aim at. He is witness to the true motives of every one of your hearts, in repairing to his house and joining in the service of this day—to the real objects you have in view, and to the actual desire with which you have met to hear his truth—and were he now to make known the secrets of every heart, how should we appear?

Yet, my dear hearers, but a little while, and these, and all other secrets, will be laid open before an assembled universe. We may cloak and cover them from our fellow worms, and if we insist upon it, even from ourselves, in a great degree: but what availeth it? The truth remaineth—the real truth, and will be made manifest in the great day of account—and, Oh! what an argument it is for the simplicity and godly sincerity of Christian conversation!

Let us, then, consider what is revealed to us of GOD's omnipresence.

That this is an attribute of deity, we cannot be ignorant. To the Ruler of the universe, it is just as essential as the attribute of omnipotence. And the frame of his own formation is to every man the evidence of the fact—"He that made the eye, shall he not see? He that made the ear, shall he not hear? He that made the heart, shall he not understand?" GOD, then, is witness to all our actions, my hearers; to every thing we do through life, whether in public or in private.

The most unimportant as well as the more serious and influential transactions, are all equally known to him.

But this is only a small part of that inspection which he exercises over the creation of his will—"He searcheth the reins, and trieth the hearts of the children of men." The inner man—the true temper and disposition of the soul—the real spring and motive of every action—what we can keep secret from all others—is open and discovered to GOD. This is the awful and tremendous quality of this attribute, which weighs down the heart and forms a fence against every delusion of its deceptions; which speaks to us of the folly of all pretences, and argues so powerfully in favor of that rectitude which fears no discovery. This it is which enforces on moral creatures the sublime rule of doing to others as we would they should do unto us. For, under an inspection which cannot be deceived, and under a judgment whose equity is bottomed on this principle, all deceit and wrong towards others, all crooked and unfair advantages, whatever may be the estimate of men, are, in fact, injuries to ourselves: GOD is witness, both to the motive and to the action, and just so sure as we would have complained against, or resisted or resented, either the motive or the action, had it been towards instead of from us—so sure will it be changed to that iniquity, on which GOD cannot look with the least degree of allowance. And here let the world, and the traffickers with its mammon, look for the measure which shall be applied to its code of moral right and wrong. To this standard let them bring the loss or the gain of its unsanctified, though consecrated maxims, and learn, that "that which is highly esteemed among men is yet abomination in the sight of GOD."

To the omnipresence of GOD, also, is to be referred the damnable guilt of hypocrisy in religion; that degradation of GOD, which puts him on a level with the most ignorant of our fellows, and offers him a lie instead of the truth; that desperate blasphemy which would make him a party to the deception we are playing off on our fellow creatures, and promote our views on them by professing an interest in him; that master-delusion of the prince of darkness, which would cloak vice under the garb of godliness, and "cry LORD! LORD!" without "doing the things which he says;" that threefold lie,

which would deceive God, and blind the world, but cheats only itself. For "God is witness," and his vision is truth.

Deeply impressed with this solemn truth, the inspired Psalmist has recorded for our instruction its effect upon his own heart, in the 139th Psalm. "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me, thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo! O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

And shall we conceit ourselves wiser than an inspired prophet, and think to hide ourselves from God? Has the light of Christianity thrown a veil over the Almighty, and obscured his glorious attributes? Or is it the veil of the world and the flesh which shrouds such multitudes, as with grave clothes, from the acknowledgment of the truth? Yet this veil will be rent away, my friends, and truth will appear in unchangeable glory, supported by that Almighty witness, who is God over all. Then shall sinners learn that "no lie is of the truth;" and that neither the wisdom, nor the cunning, nor the power of men can prevail against it; that, eternal as its author, it shall endure and flourish in majesty and brightness, when every lie and deceit, when all fraud and hypocrisy, shall be sunk in the blackness of darkness for ever.

Put, then, these considerations together, my dear hearers, and let them determine for you how you ought to be impressed every moment with the solemn warning of my text —"God is witness." He is witness to all that passes betwixt us and himself in the worship we pay him, to the motive which brought us here this day, to the sincerity or duplicity of our hearts in drawing near to him with our lips, to the spirit of devotion or of mockery wherewith we call him our God and Father. He is witness to all that passes betwixt us and our fellow creatures in the various relations in which we stand to them—as magistrates, as citizens, as heads of families, as friends, as neighbors—in all these obligations, his all-

seeing eye is over us. GOD is witness, moreover, to all that passes within us, to every temper, affection, desire, passion, and lust—to every thought of the heart, every word of the tongue, and every action of the life. And, Oh! what a GOD is our GOD! Almighty in power, unspotted in holiness, infinite in justice, unchangeable in truth, and withal a GOD of judgment. This it is, my friends, which makes his witness so impressive to us; which makes the warning of my text of such deep interest to all who hear it; because it is this unimpeachable testimony which will confound or acquit us in the great day of eternity.

Let us, then, bring home these affecting considerations, in their application to ourselves.

What hath GOD's all-observing eye been presented with, in the years of his grace bestowed upon us? Have we lived in the fear of GOD, and presented the spectacle of grateful and obedient children? or in the absence of that fear, which says, "GOD is not in all our thoughts?" Of necessity, one or the other of these must be the condition of every soul present. For to be neutral is to be an enemy. Oh! it is an awakening thought to reflect how little of GOD, of his glorious perfections, and of his abounding love and unwearied mercy to us his creatures, enters into the plans and engagements and affections of mankind as probationers for his favor in eternity. But not to bewilder your thoughts in the confusion of years, what has this ever present witness observed in you during the past week? Have the morning and the evening found you at the throne of grace, or at the shrine of folly? Has his word been your study, and his will your guide, through each day of mercy? Have your means been applied to promote his glory and the good of your fellow creatures? or have the flesh and its lusts, the world and its vanity, absorbed your thoughts and consumed your means? Count back, I beseech you, and reckon up what you have done in this one week, for GOD, for your neighbor, for your own soul—and so done it as this faithful witness must approve of. Alas! if one single week of the thousands some of us have passed through would confound our skill to find any thing for GOD and religion, what must his pure eyes have witnessed of sin and folly in the round of thoughtlessness and levity which hides

death and judgment, GOD and eternity, from the eyes of accountable beings?

But suppose a single Sabbath were to be the test to every one of us—what hath GOD seen? His holy day hailed with joy and gladness, with early praise, with devout preparation for its duties and privileges, and with earnest engagement in his holy worship? or have our thoughts been after our own hearts' lusts—wandering far from GOD even in his presence? How often has it passed through our thoughts on that holy day, "Thou GOD seest me, and takest account of all my ways?" Oh! if we had to rise up and answer, one by one, and to state truly what has occupied our thoughts and desires, even under the solemnity of public worship, how would shame and confusion of face overwhelm us! Yet, my dear hearers, GOD is witness to it all, and unless a better mind is wrought in us, and repentance obtain forgiveness, will proclaim it all before angels and men, to our eternal shame and everlasting despair. And if, at this moment, we cannot excuse ourselves—if the secret admonitions of our own hearts prompt the conviction, that we are far from the fear of the LORD, what will it be, when he shall "arise to shake terribly the earth," to set our sins in order before us, and to take vengeance for them? Will the idle vanities and sinful follies, or even the gains and the honors of the world, which fill our hearts and hide GOD from our thoughts, compensate the loss of his favor? Alas! they will then be no more! The remembrance only will remain in remorse and unavailing regret, that for these baubles we have sacrificed the joys and glories of a heavenly inheritance.

Yet there is a redeeming spot for man, in the love of GOD. This awful and ever present witness, is to us a merciful Saviour, and a faithful witness of our repentance and contrition. He sees the first turnings of the heart towards him, and as a tender Father, he runs to meet the returning prodigal. He sees our every want, our every weakness, and provides the riches of his grace to supply our feebleness. He sees the snares that are spread for us by the enemy of our souls, and furnishes the wisdom of his counsel to enable us to escape them. GOD is witness for us, if we turn to his offered mercy; he sees our tears; he witnesses our sorrows; he hears our prayers; his HOLY SPIRIT returns to renew our

hearts, to show us the things which are JESUS CHRIST'S, to guide our feet in the way of peace, and prepare us for a place at his right hand—when he will be our witness for that righteousness to which is promised a crown of life. "Choose ye, then, this day," that testimony which you would desire to have in the great day of eternity. Deceive not your own souls with the vain hope, that sin is less ruinous than GOD hath said. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," is the testimony of Him who cannot deceive. And forget not, I beseech you, that GOD is witness to the warning of this day—that he will require it at your hands—and according as it is received or rejected, will it be well or ill with you for ever. O that GOD may open your eyes to see, and your hearts to perceive, "the things which make for your peace, before they are for ever hid from your eyes!" That the solemn truth, "thou GOD seest me," may go with you to your homes, follow you through all your pursuits, nor cease knocking at the door of your hearts, until it opens an entrance for the truth that saveth, in the knowledge of GOD and of JESUS CHRIST whom he hath sent, by the teaching of the HOLY GHOST.

Here I might close, my brethren, but the impressive and important ordinance administered this evening, calls for a particular enlargement of the momentous truth, that "GOD is witness" to those who have openly pledged themselves to GOD and his CHRIST, in the renewal of their baptismal covenant; and have once more received the highest assurance compatible with a state of trial to moral beings, that if true and sincere in this dedication of themselves to his glory and service, his almighty grace is with them, to strengthen and direct, to sustain and comfort them, in working out their eternal salvation.

Therefore, my brethren, who have been this evening confirmed, while in the judgment of charity we are bound to take for granted, as we gladly do, that, by the teaching of the HOLY SPIRIT, you have been brought forward to profess your faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as the only hope of fallen man, and solemnly pledged yourselves to walk after the ex-

ample of his most holy life; so are we bound to remind you that "God is witness" to the vows you have taken upon yourselves—and that only as you are faithful on your part, can you expect the fulfilment of those promises which are made to you through his dear Son—and by the effect of which, only, can you hope to succeed, against the powers, and passions, and corruptions, leagued against your souls.

It is a very solemn engagement you have entered into, my brethren, when considered merely as transacted before the witnesses present—respect for yourselves and for them must have some weight—he is a hardened person who can fly in the face of society, and make light of the obligations he voluntarily and publicly undertakes. But what is this, when compared with the greater and undeceivable witness of Almighty God? He reads your heart at this solemn moment, and according to the sincerity and truth of your purpose, looks down with complacency and delight upon you, as honoring his holy name; or turns away with abhorrence, from the audacious mockery of thinking to deceive his heart-searching eye.

Treasure up, then, in your hearts, this short but impressive truth—"God is witness" to the contract of this day. And let it rule your heart and life, to walk, as seeing Him who is invisible; to act, as those who have to give an account at the bar of judgment for the deeds done in the body, and are furnished, through the mercy and goodness of God, with all the means necessary to secure eternal life, through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Hold fast," therefore, "the profession of your faith without wavering;" for only by constancy and perseverence can you expect to gain the prize of your high calling. And in every trial to which, in the sundry and manifold changes of the world, you may be exposed, remember, "God is witness" that you have this day pledged yourselves to his service; that he cannot be deceived or deluded; and that it is only to "him who is faithful unto death," that "the crown of life" is promised, by that merciful Saviour, who hath bought you with his blood—reconciled God to the world of his offending creatures, and opened a new and a living way to the kingdom of heaven, to all believers. To whose holy name, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, world without end.

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